



March 2021
Vol.35 No.3

Flight

Newsletter of the Bird Stamp Society

*Coursers
and
Pratincoles*



Featured In This Issue ...

Endangered & Extinct Birds
Lekking Birds
The Basel Dove
Facts on Swifts
North Borneo Argus Pheasant
Website Update And more



Part 2 of Extinction in the Antipodes

**THE
BSS**

Bringing
Bird Stamp
Collectors Together



Plus All Your Regulars:

*New Listings
Noddy Notes
Chiffchaff Chat
Committee Reports*



www.birdstampsociety.org.uk



The Bird Stamp Society was formed to cater for the large number of collectors who specialise in bird stamps and relevant material

CHAIRMAN Tony Statham	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
VICE CHAIR Doug Blake	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
GENERAL SECRETARY Mel West	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
TREASURER Graham Horsman	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Graham Horsman	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
AUCTION SECRETARY	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
PACKET SECRETARY Philip Cant	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
FLIGHT EDITOR & Distributor Gilly Christmas	<i>Removed for web edition</i>
WEBSITE Gilly Christmas	<i>Removed for web edition</i>

Flight is the quarterly magazine of the Bird Stamp Society, published in March, June, September and December. Material should be sent to the editor by the middle of the month preceding publication - at the very latest. Members are invited to consult the editor in advance regarding submission and format of material. Back numbers of "*Flight*" are available from the Secretary @ free of charge plus P&P, and available on our website.

Annual Subscriptions (Renewable 31st July)

UK Members: £15.00; European members: £30.00 (or Euro equivalent); Rest of the World: £35.00.

Email Subscribers/members: £5.00 (UK / Worldwide for BOTH *Flight* & Auction).

ALL stamps dotted about the place in this edition of '*Flight*' are from the year **1992**. There are some exceptions, usually within members articles, and these have been labelled accordingly.

Website - www.birdstampsociety.org.uk

Any enquiries, blogs, articles etc for the website Please send to Gilly Christmas, details above.



Contents

Features

7 Coursers and Pratincoles

A look at these Plover-like birds in Tony Statham's latest 'Lesser Known Birds that Rarely Feature on Stamps' series

8 Collecting Complexity - 'The Eyes in the Jungle'.

Mel West delves into the quirks of the North Borneo *Argus Pheasant* stamps for Part One of his latest complexity topic.

17 Cinderella Stamps from Puffin Island

Something completely different for a change!. A review of some local island stamps from Steven Ardron.

20 Lekking Birds

Graham U'Ren gives a fascinating insight into particular birds and their displays, all featured on stamps.

25 Interesting Bird Facts - The Swift

Everything to want to know about *Apus apus* with John Graham.

26 Extinction in the Antipodes - Part Two

Joseph Forshaw winds up his excellent article with a look at the Laughing Owl, Huia, South Island Piopio and more.

27 The Basel Dove

A further article from Graham U'Ren Something quite different and Swiss specific.



Regulars

5 Committee Reports

All your reports from the Committee and an important reminder of standing order changes for subscriptions.

14 Noddy Notes

Articles, news and New Issues

30 Buzin Watch No 9

Mel West is back With the Common Cuckoo.

31 Chiffchaff Chat

Gilly Christmas gives an update on the new website, including the Forum, new pages and the results of the latest questionnaire.

30 New Listings

Comprehensive and detailed updates for all new listings, compiled by Roger Chapman



Welcome

Contributors in this Edition:

- Tony Statham;
- Mel West;
- Graham Horsman;
- Steven Ardron;
- Roger Chapman;
- Graham U'ren;
- John Graham;
- Joseph Forshaw.



Hope On the Horizon!

The news on 22nd February from Boris Johnson should hopefully give us all some much-needed hope, that if people behave themselves and the vaccinations continue to go well, we MAY just be starting to get the better of this nasty virus I for one am keeping everything

crossed. But, as we are still in lockdown, I thought I would add some extra pages to this edition of Flight, to give you something to read to while away the days. Joseph Forshaw completes his article on the disappearing bird species of New Zealand, a fascinating read and beautifully written too ...do have a read, starting on page 26. After our Secretary, Mel West, finished his collecting complexity series on the Kagu in the last edition of Flight, I was sure he would have a 'writing break' But No! Lockdown seems to be making us scribble away, and Mel's latest series starts on page 8, this time on the North Borneo Argus pheasant. I hope the article helps you with your collection of these birds It is certainly going to help me!

Another member, 'north of the border', Graham U'Ren, has submitted two offerings this quarter. His first, on Lekking birds is a cracker of a read, with a rather interesting Postscript! ... have a peep of his article, starting on page 20. His second article is something completely different featuring the Basel Dove. I had never heard of this apparent rarity, but am fully up to speed with its history now, thanks to Graham ... you can be too by reading page 27.

Steven Ardron has been busy too oh now he's up north too, what is it about these lads up there in the cold parts of the country?! Anyway, he has provided much of the material for the New Issues features in Noddy Notes (page 14), and has also penned an article on another topic we rarely feature Cinderellas. I reckon this is a good alternative for stamp collectors, to the plethora of stuff coming out of African countries in particular Start looking at cinderellas I say, some are simply great. I loved Steven's article on the cinderella stamps of Puffin Island, off the Anglesey coast (page 17), as I am a big fan of the puffin, and have recently become interested in Lundy stamps So many puffins, I'm hooked!

We have more features to whet yer appetite - Coursers and Pratincoles from our Chairman (page 7), and facts on Swifts from member John Graham (page 25), plus of course, all our regular features, enough I hope to keep you going for a wee while!

As always I could do with more stock, and in particular some help with sourcing different material too I mention this on page 31, perhaps you could give a hand? And if someone wants to take over the editor role of Flight, that is open too. I enjoy doing the magazine for you, and will continue to produce it if no-one comes forward, but I thought I would just ask share the load so to speak, as I also have, as you know, the website to keep fresh. There may be someone out there, recently retired, who would love to take Flight on, and unless you ask

It only remains for me to say, *Enjoy the read, keep well and Stay Safe!*



Until Next Time

Committee Reports

Chairman's Report

No, I won't talk about Covid or the weather even though both still influence much of our daily lives other than to trust that you are all still surviving these difficult times.

One particular message this time is a gentle reminder to those who have not yet altered their standing order instructions to their banks to raise the annual subscription rate to £20, this from the normal renewal date of 1st August. Our Treasurer and General Secretary will have already advised this change but unfortunately, unlike direct debits, it is up to the account holder to make the change, not the organisation charging you for the fee. Those of you who take their copy of *Flight* via e-mail still have the benefit of only paying an unchanged fee of £5.00 per annum. **Please double check to make sure this alteration is made before the renewal date, and thank you to all those who have already done so. Failure to do so may result in the cancellation of your membership.**

We are pleased to see that the revamped website has encouraged several new members to join the society and I welcome you to our fold. Without regular meetings, we rely very much on you, the members, to let us on the committee know what your preferences are and whether you have any complaints or problems in collecting bird stamps. Any thematic collecting has many variations within a defined subject, but we hope that our *Flight* magazine caters to as many aspects of the hobby as possible.

Contributions to the Editor are always welcome and indeed anyone who wishes to contact me or any member of the committee should do so. It is alas a sad fact of life that we rarely hear from our members, so please feel free to let us know if we are doing or not doing what you expect.



I mentioned that there are many aspects to collecting a theme in philately and in our topic we often hear conflicts about whether our members are philatelists or ornithologists – most are probably both and

it is very much in the remit of the individual to decide how and what emphasis models their stamp collection.



Personally, I have always had an interest in Natural History with ornithology being the main focus. However, while I do not profess to be a professional philatelist, I try and respect the basic tenets of that activity. Longer-term members will know that while I tend to collect everything from everywhere, I am always happy to explore any dimension in the world of bird stamps such as those that feature the eggs of birds.

My fairly regular articles about bird species that are rarely displayed on stamps is another sideline I have followed for a few years and there are still many families that I hope to discuss under this point of view.

While we usually benefit (?) from an avalanche of new issues in the bird stamp world, the travails of last year from the dreaded virus seem to have curtailed the activities of the printing presses, as according to the birdtheme.org website only some 600 new issues were launched in 2020; this contrasts with two or three times the number of most years since 2010. Stay safe, keep well and go on enjoying the world of bird stamps.

Tony Statham

Membership Secretary's Notes Jan—Mar 2021

Unlike the previous quarter this one has been unusually busy with several new members joining the flock. I would like to welcome the following who have joined since my last note:

David Griffiths (UK members may recognise this name as David who owns Thames Themes), Steven Strauss, Robin Symons, George Dujardin, Rob Oliver (re-joined after a few years), Martin Banthorpe, Lucien Perera (our first

member from Sri Lanka), David Hughes, Dr Redwan Al-Karim Bhuiyan (our first member from Fiji Islands), Ken Young, Margaret Emerson, Aart t' Jong, David Clarkson and Justyn Stahl.

It is my sad duty to inform members that member Gareth James sadly passed away in January. I have sent his widow, Gill, our condolences.

Hard Copy rate for subscriptions paid by Standing Order

You will have hopefully read the notes from our Chair regarding the proposed action that will be taken should members who currently pay their £15 subscription fail to take the action to contact their bank and increase their standing order. I have tried to make this as easy as possible for all members concerned and in August when I have to close down the accounts, produce Financial reports and collect subscriptions, I am not going to contact members who have failed to take the necessary actions.

Our membership now stands at 156.

Graham Horsman



General Secretary's Notes

I am writing this in mid-February and most of Scotland and swathes of north and eastern England have had significant snowfalls. My bit of the Borders has had at least 10 centimetres and despite gritting and shovelling, travel became, at least for a few days, shall we say challenging.

We are all still in lockdown too, although to be honest, it really doesn't feel as if we ever came out of it. In March it will be a year since the first lockdown and everyone's world changed. And, perhaps it will never be quite the same again. Yes, the vaccination programming is being rolled out, but we are not out of the woods yet and I suspect will not be for some while.

Thank heavens we have our stamp



collections and other interests to keep us all sane!
So what news within the Society is there to share?

As Graham will confirm, despite COVID, the new website after only eight months has continued to attract new members. We have now reached a level that pre-dates 2018 and anticipate that we will grow further in the coming months. That's truly good news.



Gilly has done a phenomenal job on the new website and developed it further. Over ninety members have registered and a number use its facilities on a regular basis. It now has some new features which I know Gilly will detail, but crucially, the members only area offers more than previously. If you haven't got around to registering do so now. You don't know what you are missing! It offers a massive resource to assist your collecting interests and philatelic knowledge. Use it.

The increase in subscriptions to **£20 for (UK only) hard copy Flight** remains on schedule for this summer. As you will have read in both Graham's and Tony's notes there are a handful of members who have still not returned their SAE's. To reinforce their comments, if you have not done so do so now or, regrettably, you risk losing your membership.

Enough said, I think. Stay safe.

Mel West



Treasurer's Report for Period Ending February 2021

In my previous report I stated that our printing invoice for our September Flight remained unchanged at £318 for 80 x copies (cost per page was 0.099 rounded to 10p). There was a small reduction in the cost for our December Flight despite the fact that the invoice was for £275 (Cost per page was 0.095p). The September issue is usually our largest issue as this contains all the end of year accounts and Committee member's reports.

January saw an increase in postal rates which would normally be applied in late March. BREXIT also introduced a requirement for customs labels (at no cost) for all overseas mail that contains items of value. The new rates apply to all members who receive hard copy.

Our packet is now again under temporary suspension due to COVID. With the vaccination program now in place and the 'R' rate dropping below 1 there is a chance that the packets will be able to restart soon.



Paypal. Paypal is a popular method for members to pay/renew their subscriptions however my account is now being charged 55p for every £5 receipt. I have, therefore, amended our application form (and will do likewise for the subscription reminder form sent out in June), and asked that members add 60p to their £5. It should be noted that compared to other Societies £5 is the cheapest by a distance for emailed copies.

This rate was introduced in August 2013 and was based, at that time, as a contribution to offset the day to day running expenses. Running expenses have only increased by a small amount and is more than covered by the £5 rate. Our balances at the bank stand at £98.94 (current account) and £16439.16 (deposit account).

Graham Horsman

Committee Reports

Flight Editor Report

First of all an apology for a number of typos in the last edition of Flight ... poor concentration on my part. The errata are as follows:

- ♦ on page 12, under the 'Collecting Kagu Definitives' heading It should say '**Part 2** - From Fine Art ...'
- ♦ Page 26, in the Junior Corner section, 2nd line Should be '**These** pages';
- ♦ Page 32 ... New Listings (3) ... the list is slightly corrupted, so I have included it again in this edition; and
- ♦ Page 35 .. The type in red, half way down the page 'No corrections **in** this issue'.

Must try harder.

Developing the website has thrown up a particular issue on the content of Flight versus the content of the website. Of the 154 current members, 102 have registered with the website. In order to get the website up and running, I put a lot of existing Flight articles up on the public-facing website pages. That's all well and good. But we are now starting to develop the Members Only area in earnest, the content of which is potentially not available to members who have not registered with the website, do not have email and/or do not use the internet.

So what you may well ask? Well, I'm trying to put some of the articles on the website in to the Flight magazine too, to benefit the 52 non registered members, whilst at the same time, trying not to duplicate matters too muchquite tricky to get a nice balance.

My advice is this If you have not registered with the website, and CAN ... i.e. you have an email address and you do use the internet from time to time, then please do contact me if you would like to register with the website and benefit from so much more than is currently in Flight. The website, compared to the Flight magazine, is sooooo much bigger and can take masses more information, which I hope you will enjoy.

Compiling the Society magazine, and building and maintaining the website is, no surprises here, taking up quite a lot of my time Just as well we are in Lockdown I holler! And so, I am calling out for help, to assist in the compiling of Flight, or even to take it on altogether ... see page 31.

Gilly Christmas

Courasers and Pratincoles

Tony Statham

Lesser Known Birds that Rarely Appear on Stamps Series .

The Coursers and Pratincoles are a fairly small family of elegant plover-like birds in the family *Glareolidae* and divided into two well-defined sub-families, the coursers (*Cursoriinae*) and the Pratincoles (*Glareolinae*); one genus (*Pluvianus*) represented by the Egyptian plover may in fact be more closely related to the thick-knee plovers.



Cream-coloured Courser (right)

Oriental Pratincole (below)

The families are closely related to the true plovers and kindred genera such as various waders, avocets and thick-knees. There are 6 genera and 17 species (9 Coursers and 8 Pratincoles)



which mostly inhabit the Afro-tropical region but extend to parts of Asia and Australia. Most species are small to medium sized largely terrestrial birds ranging in size from 17 to 29 cm in length and the majority are characterised by a short arched bill. The coursers tend to be longer legged and have a ground-dwelling existence whereas the Pratincoles have longer and more pointed wings supporting their largely aerial life-style, feeding on the wing and resembling to some extent terns or large swallows.



Burchell's courser (left)

Temminck's courser (below)



Three-banded courser

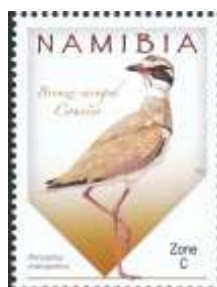
Pratincoles are mostly linked with inland water environments, usually riverine and especially with exposed rocks and/or

sandbars; they are more or less gregarious at all times even when nesting and flocks can reach several hundreds or even thousands of birds often associated with other water birds such as plovers and terns. Coursers tend to favour dry woodland and semi-arid scrub to true desert habitats, generally at low altitudes. Some species will form small flocks but others will typically be found singly, in pairs or family groups of three or four individuals.



Double-banded courser

Jerdon's courser (below)



Bronze-winged courser

Pratincoles are noisy birds with sharp, agitated rather tern-like calls uttered in flight while Coursers are less vocal with harsher more grating notes. The food of all *Glareolids* is principally insects, especially larger items such as locusts and beetles. Pratincoles forage mostly in flight whereas Coursers take all their food on the ground, sometimes digging for insect larvae. Coursers obtain all their water requirements from their ingested food but Pratincoles drink frequently.



Collared Pratincole

Rock Pratincole (below)



Nesting habits of the *Glareolids* is well known in only a few species but as a broad generalisation, the behaviour is much the same as their plover relatives. Courtship has not been studied for most of the species but, where known, nests are very rudimentary scrapes in open ground.

Clutch size is normally 1-4 eggs with many coursers only laying two eggs at a time. Eggs are well camouflaged to blend with the open environment of the nest site. In some species sand is used to cover the eggs usually when the incubating parent leaves the nest. However, evidence exists to show that this habit can also be used as a temperature control, particularly in hot weather and some species will also wet their belly feathers to assist in keeping the clutch cool.

Cream-coloured courser (right)



Temminck's courser (below)



Coursers are not generally migratory but can be highly nomadic depending on weather conditions. Pratincoles on the other hand demonstrate significant migration patterns with the Black-winged Pratincole perhaps holding the prize for distances covered in their movements from the steppes of southern Eurasia to central and southern Africa, a round trip of some 20,000 kilometres.

Although human activities are inevitably responsible for the long-term decline in most *Glareolid* species, only Jerdon's Courser is threatened having been thought to be extinct since the early 1900s until its re-discovery in 1986; it is however one of the world's rarest birds. Some Pratincoles are affected by modern agricultural methods and the damming of certain rivers in Africa has reduced nesting habitat.

It appears that there are only about twenty stamps depicting these species, most of which have been printed in the 21st century and this article has been able to show most of them. Seven Courser species have at least one stamp at the moment but only a few illustrate three of the Pratincoles.

As usual, I am very grateful for much of the information in this article being taken from the Handbook of the Birds of the World (Volume 3) and for images provided via the birdtheme.org website.

COLLECTING *Complexity*



Part 1 of Mel West's latest complexity study ... this time Argus Pheasant

The Eyes in the Jungle

North Borneo Part 1: The Great Argus Pheasant series

Introduction

I wonder how many of us possess some examples of the bird stamps of North Borneo. I have just a small handful. They are mainly the overprinted/surcharged varieties resulting from the 1939 two cent green and red-brown Palm Cockatoo. These are the issues that tend to pop up frequently in club books and dealer packets.

Both the original and overprints are relatively common and inexpensive, but were amongst the last bird stamps issued. A fresh King George VI set of definitives came out in 1949 without any bird designs. The last set to show anything ornithological was the QEII definitives of 1961 with a Rhinoceros Hornbill and Crested Wood Partridge. And that was it. A few more years and the territory disappeared as a stamp issuing entity. End of story?

Well, far from it. North Borneo has a rich, and some could justifiably claim, frustrating postal history. You need to go back much further in time to unravel some of the interesting and perhaps perplexing issues to be discovered with its earlier stamps. In fact, like Borneo itself - the third largest island in the world - it's quite possible to become lost in the jungle.

A (very) brief history of the North Borneo Chartered Company

You cannot talk about the stamps of North Borneo without first saying something about the company that effectively ran the country for sixty five years. The North Borneo Chartered Company (NBCC), usually referred to as the "British North Borneo Company," was a royal chartered company formed in 1881 in London to administer and develop the resources of a defined area of Northern Borneo. Let's just call it, "the company." See figure 1 for their official coat of arms.

The territory became a British protectorate as British North Borneo in 1888, but the company remained a key player until the



Fig.1 – Arms of the British North Borneo Company

Japanese occupation in 1941.

North Borneo was devastated by the war and the company was unable to rebuild its infrastructure. In 1946 it waived its charter, gave North Borneo to the British Colonial Office and then ceased to exist. North Borneo remained a colony until 1963 when, as Sabah, it became part of Malaysia.

Even as a protectorate, the company remained the main power driving the country. It was responsible for economic development, exploited natural resources, created settlements, built a railway, introduced coinage and, just a few years after its charter was granted, also produced postage stamps.



Fig.2 – Colonial North Borneo (circa 1898)

Third columnists – the postage stamp of North Borneo

Ah, stamps at last! For eighty years, in whatever political guise, North Borneo had a postal service. Many of the issues are rightly regarded as "classics" and a wee dip into Stanley Gibbons specialist catalogue reveals over 400 standard items, including overprintings and surcharges, plus nearly 90 postage dues.

But collectors are not always in agreement about the postage stamps of North Borneo.

There is a plethora of varieties due to perforation, colour shades, overprint types and overprinting applications that expands the numbers considerably. They have been referred to as, "...some of the most attractive and innovative issues to emerge at the end of the 19th century." (John Winchester, Stamp Magazine). But they have also been described as very confusing due to, "...the seemingly endless array of cancelled-to-order remainders, printer's waste, improbable perforations, spurious overprints and downright forgeries that exist." (ibid).

Winchester also called the company a, "slightly eccentric administration," which, given the power they wielded and the way they operated, is perhaps justifiable and probably an understatement. Indeed, as he points out, they certainly knew how to market postage stamps.

The company were adept at selling excess material to stamp dealers. For example, there was the practice of seemingly encouraging varieties. This included imperforate printings, sheets with errors, frame proofs, and then issues cancelled-to-order but also cancelled with unnatural precision. Stamps were produced in excessive numbers and the surplus then shipped on to dealers in the philatelic trade. It explains the plethora of varieties, and often their presence in the infamous "third column" in catalogues. But perhaps it doesn't explain why some issues still command such unbelievably high catalogue values!

The Third Catalogue Column

One of the peculiarities of North Borneo stamps is the existence of a third price column in the Stanley Gibbons catalogue. This indicates the price for stamps with a remainder cancellation. The cancellations are in the form of distinctive black bars. Usually 14 bars but sometimes more, they appear in either an oval or eye shape. The practice of indicating excess stamps in this manner is sometimes referred to as "postmarking."

Prices in the third column are generally substantially lower than those found in the mint and used columns.

Overall there are a number of series, consisting of several distinct sets that cover four reigns and range from eight to fifteen designs in each.

However, the bird designs are found in only a relatively smaller number of series. In fact, just four. The earliest runs from 1894 and includes only one bird, while the last was issued in 1961 with just two species. For an outline breakdown of the bird series see Table.1 below:-

Table.1 – The Four North Borneo Bird Series

Series No.	Date Range	Designs Total	Basic Value Range	Birds Species in Series
I	1894-1905	12	1c-24c	Great Argus Pheasant
II	1909-1938	12	1c-24c	Palm Cockatoo, Rhinoceros Hornbill, Dwarf Cassowary
III	1939-1947	15	1c-\$5	Palm Cockatoo
IV	1961-1963	16	1c-\$10	Rhinoceros Hornbill, Crested Partridge

The first two series highlighted are by far the most complicated for a number of technical, economic and political reasons and I intend to talk about them in two separate articles. The earliest with its single bird stands out as an absolute humdinger, so that's the one I'll focus on first. I will try to keep it straightforward, but I have to warn it will become labyrinthine.

Innovations - The Waterlow sets

Between 1883 and 1894 there were a number of issues, all of which were variations on the company coat-of-arms design and printed in London by the marvellously named Blades, East & Blades. I think they are pretty monotonous, boring, minor variations on a theme, and besides, some were extensively forged, most notably those with overprints and surcharges. None of them need concern us here, although they crop up with the later overprints and surcharges.



SET 1: First dual-colour issues

Everything changed when in 1894 the Company commissioned Waterlow & Sons to produce a set of low value stamps. This time they opted for something radically different and arguably innovative. Initially there were just nine values, but later sets added three more designs. And they were ground-breaking. Beautifully recess printed, they showed a number of vignettes depicting local scenes, each mainly in black ink but surrounded by frames with different designs and colours. They had impact.

And they included one bird design, the 5c Great Argus Pheasant (See figure 3 left). However, I would argue that we need to consider the whole sets here because otherwise you lose the context in which that one issue sits. The Great Argus on its own is a lovely stamp, but its magic is enhanced when it is with its fellows.

Fig.3 – 1894 5c Great Argus Pheasant (SG72)

All the designs were popular and successful and certainly stand up to further scrutiny with the detail they provide. There is a cohesiveness. For the full array within the series, including the later designs, see Table.2 below:-

Table. 2 – 1st Waterlow Series (All set designs) -1894-1905

Date 1st Introduced	Value	Design	Colours (centre then frame)	SG
1894	1c	Dyak chief	Black & olive bistre	66
1894	2c	Sambar Stag	Black & rose-lake	68
1894	3c	Sago Palm	Olive green & dull purple	70
1900	4c	Orang Utan**	Black & green	98
1894	5c	Great Argus Pheasant	Black & vermilion	72
1894	6c	Company arms	Black & bistre brown	73
1894	8c	Malay Dhow	Black & dull purple	74
1902	10c	Sun bear**	Brown & slate lilac	104
1894	12c	Estuarine Crocodile	Black & blue	75
1902	16c	Borneo railway train**	Green & chestnut	107
1894	18c	Mount Kinabalu	Black & deep green	78
1894	24c	Arms with supporters	Blue & rose lake	79

The Eyes in the Jungle – The Great Argus Pheasant

The Great Argus (*Argusianus argus*) is one of the largest Pheasants, with a total length of up to 200cms and a huge tail of between 100 and 140cms long for the male. Its plumage is predominantly brown, but it has a rufous red breast and distinctive blue head and neck with a black hair-like crown. There are two sub-species:- The Malayan peninsular/Sumatran Great Argus (*A.a.argus*), and the slightly smaller Borneo Great Argus (*A.a.grayi*).



You cannot tell from the vignette, but the bird depicted on the stamps must surely be the latter!

It's not a very remarkable bird, but for one spectacular feature – its courtship display. The male delineates a dancing spot on the jungle floor, and then attracts females with loud calls. When that has succeeded it will dance in front of her with its wings spread into two huge fans and its head largely hidden. The fan reveals hundreds of eyes on the feathers with a beautiful patterning. And hence the name: "Argus."



SET 2: 1897 Redesigned "Inscription" issues

But there was more to come. In 1897 the frames were redesigned to include local languages. See figure 4 below. These are sometimes referred to as the Malay inscriptions, although technically the tabs use two languages with Jawi script on the left side and Chinese on the other. In addition, as Table 2 reveals, a few years later three new values and pictorial designs were added – a 4c Orang-utan, a 10c Sun bear and a 16c railway train, but the basic aesthetic concept was retained, including the essential design for the Great Argus with its tail feathers displayed. The main colour is now "orange-vermilion" (see Fig.4 below).



Fig.4 – 1897 5c Great Argus Pheasant (SG100)

With me so far? I hope so, because this is where things start to become a wee bit complicated.

At this point I need to mention the perforation variations which, to spice things up, run through all the sets. All the ones described so far and all the ones that follow. Time to pause here.

If you check your specialised Stanley Gibbons catalogue you will find an informative note about the Waterlow perforations. It makes clear that there are a number of small variations in perforations for all the Waterlow printed issues between 1894 and 1922. The variations are believed to be due to faulty equipment giving irregularities in the perforating pins, rather than random selections of different perforators. In effect, perforations can vary between 12 and 15 and in compounds in set blocks. For what "compounds" entail see the information box below.

For example, the first 1894 set is given as having perforations of 12 to 13 as standard, which means the perforation could be 12, 12.5 or 13 or even compound! Others are cited as 13.5 to 14 or compound and there is a 14.5 to 15 or compound as well. However, higher perforations, for example 15.5 to 16, are due to the use of a different perforating machine.

This has produced quite erratic outcomes within the sets. Indeed, it is believed that Waterlow's perforating machinery has resulted in more than 50 catalogued varieties in the series, which, if nothing else, has considerably whopped up the value of some of these stamps.

The five cent Great Argus in the 1894 set (SG72) is given as having a standard perforation of between 14.5 to 15, but, wait for it, it can also be found with perforations of 13.5 to 14 (SG72b), 13.5 to 14/compound 12 to 13 (SG72c), 13.5 to 14/compound 14.5 to 15 (SG72d), and perforated 12 to 13 (SG72e). Oh, and to add to the fun there is even a completely unperforated variety (SG72a).

Compound Perforations

This occurs when there are two perforation gauges operating but they are not necessarily found on either side of the stamp. For example, one side might be perforated 13.5 and the others as 14. This would then be expressed as 13.5-14/compound. It is even possible that three different perforation might co-exist on one stamp, say, 12, 14.5 and 15. This is then quoted as 12, 14.5, 15/compound.

Now, you might say, so what? Well, the "what," will be your wallet! The standard perforation for the 1894 Great Argus is catalogued at £14 mint and £11 used. Although you might find it for less. But SG72b takes that up to £50 and £60 respectively; SG72c has no price for mint but is catalogued at £65 used; and whilst nothing is recorded for the other variants, the imperforate is quoted as £900 mint. And this is the cheaper end. A handful of the other (non-Great Argus) values in the set are catalogued at higher prices, some substantially!

The same issue arises with the 1897 set. The "standard" perforation for the 5c Great Argus (SG100) is between 13.5 and 14 but there are a further four variants. It can be found with a perforation of between 14.5 and 15 (SG100a), between 13.5 and 14/compound (SG100b) and between 12 and 13 (SG100c). They are expensive mint, but more affordable used. Additionally there is also an imperforate version (SG100ab), but that is far scarcer and catalogued at £1,700 so it is unlikely you will stumble across that one.

The point to keep emphasising here is that perforation is a key feature and you are advised to always check.

SET 3: 1899 Surcharges

In 1899 six of the 1897 Waterlow set – including the 5c Great Argus – and six of an earlier (Blades, East Blades) arms set were surcharged and overprinted "4 CENTS" in black. These have a distinctive 4.5mm gap between the figure and letters. See figure 5 right (apologies for fuzzy picture):-

Fig.5 – 1899 4c/5c Great Argus (SG112)





The six Waterlows in this set are listed in Table.3 below:-

Table.3 – 1899 (Waterlow) "4 CENTS" Surcharges

Value	Design	Colour	SG
4c/5c	Great Argus	Black/orange vermillion	112
4c/6c	Arms of Company	Black/bistre brown	113
4c/8c	Malay Dhow	Black/brown purple	114
4c/12c	Estuarine Crocodile	Black/dull blue	115
4c/18c	Mount Kinabalu	Black/green	116
4c/24c	Arms with supporters	Blue/lake	117

The 1899 issues – all twelve of them – seem ostensibly pretty straightforward, except the perforation comes into play again. The Great Argus issue (SG112) is supposed to be overprinted on the SG100a version of the 1897 set, except it can be found with two perforation varieties – SG112a which is perforated between 13.5 and 14, and 112b which is perforated 13.5 to 14 but compound 12 to 13 as well.

If you are keen to collect these, only 112a in used condition is relatively cheap, the others, particularly mint are pricey.

SET 4: British Protectorate Overprints

A fourth set appeared from 1901. A number were issued from October of that year including the 5c Great Argus, but others in this set appeared in 1902 and some even as late as 1905.

This is another overprint set, but this time to reflect a political change and not a surcharge. Whilst North Borneo became a British protectorate in the late 1880's, the issues continued to bear the heading "State of North Borneo." The 1901 set attempted to reflect the territories status by overprinting the issues "BRITISH PROTECTORATE." It is not recorded why this change should be needed, let alone twelve years after the change of status had happened! The wording wasn't to feature as part of the design until further issues in 1909 and then only in lettering that is significantly smaller than "STATE OF NORTH BORNEO." It's bizarre, but then the North Borneo Company was very adroit at revenue raising ideas.

The twelve values from 1c to 24c are included in this set, as well as seven coat of arms designs, giving nineteen values in total. For reasons that are unclear the overprint colours vary from design to design. The 5c Great Argus is overprinted in a wishy-washy green which does not seem to work well against the orange-vermillion. Other values used red, blue and black with varying degrees of success. The choice of colour is sometimes not helped by the spacing between "BRITISH" and "PROTECTORATE." The 5c Great Argus for example has the two words 14mm apart. If you look at the selection of issues from this set in figure 6 below, you might see what I mean. A full listing of the overprinting colours on the Waterlow designs only is provided in Table 4.



Fig.6 – 1901 set – a selection of overprinted issues (2c SG128, 4c SG130, 5c SG131, 8c SG133 & 12c SG135)

Table.4 – 1901/2 set Overprinting Colours*

Value	Design	Over-print Colour	SG
1c	Dyak chief	Red	127
2c	Sambar stag	Red	128
3c	Sago Palm	Blue	129
4c	Orang Utan	Green	130
5c	Great Argus	Green	131
6c	Company arms	Red	132
8c	Malay Dhow	Blue	133
10c	Sun bear	Red	134
12c	Estuarine crocodile	Red	135
16c	Borneo railway train	Black	136
18c	Mount Kinabalu	Red	137
24c	Arms & supporters	Black	138

*Waterlows in the set only

The standard perforation for this set is 13.5 to 14, but again some variances can be found amongst each issue. The 5c Great Argus – originally SG100 but now designated SG131 – can also be found with a perforation of 14.5 to 15 (SG131a). Additionally, six of the other values have no full-stop after "PROTECTORATE." Good luck with searching for them if you want the whole set. Most have a high catalogue value.

The Stanley Gibbons catalogue values SG131 at £70 mint and under £5 used, whilst 131a is priced somewhat lower at £14 mint and just over £3 used. The Stampworld online prices seem to reflect only the latter perforation variety.

SET 5: 1904/05 Surcharges

The last set in this series was a further overprinted surcharge issued between 1904 and 1905. Again the surcharge was just for just four cents, but this time with a smaller four and lower case lettering, thus: "4 cents". And I don't know why it was necessary to produced a revised surcharged set using the same value. This time, the spacing between the figure and letters can be a little less than previously, perhaps between 3mm and 4mm. See figure 7 below for the Great Argus example:-

Fig.7 - 1904 Surcharged 4c/5c (SG146)





The set comprises just six of the Waterlow pictorial designs and six of the Blades arms designs. Both design types reflect those used for the previous 1899 surcharge set.

The surcharge is this time applied to the SG100a perforation variety for the Great Argus and there is no other recorded perforation for this value on this occasion. That is not the case with some of the other issues. The prices will make you hesitate a little though. For example, the catalogue values for the Great Argus stamp are £50 mint and £55 used. Even the Stampworld prices offer £30 mint and £50 used, so this is an issue for keen collectors!

So, five distinct sets for this series of designs, each with their own degrees of complexity. But the story doesn't quite end there. They were used for postage due issuances as well and they should not be ignored.

The Postage Dues

No dedicated Postage Due stamps were produced in North Borneo until 1939 and all examples prior to that date were existing issues overprinted. Those in the early Waterlow series are not without considerable complexity. And that's an understatement. There are four basic sets where the Waterlows come into play and they can be fraught with challenges for the collector, not least of which is their often high catalogue value.

Additionally, the matter of the third column also rears its head again. The overprinting was initially undertaken locally by the North Borneo Herald (although the earliest versions were probably in Singapore) and this occasionally this led to printing variances. So there is fun to be had there. Further overprintings tended to be undertaken by Waterlow and were largely for sale to dealers and therefore a money-making scam by the Company, with some issues neatly cancelled-to-order or further overprinted "SPECIMEN." So caution is needed here.

Being overprints, the perforation varieties of course also turn up within the sets, but another complication is that some of the issues have colour variants as well and are accordingly catalogued with completely new numbers. This does not affect the 5c Great Argus in any of the sets - it remains Black/vermillion or Black/orange-vermillion - but what does become an issue is the positioning of the wording "POSTAGE DUE." Some are placed horizontally, others vertically reading upwards. Some values even read downwards! And finally, some issues have a full stop placed after "DUE." Normally, the full stop is omitted.

Crucially, the 5c Great Argus Postage Due overprints were also subject to forgeries or forged cancellations. They are a minefield. If you were seriously into collecting all the issues in the postage due sets a lifetime's labour of either love or foolishness would lie before you. Providing you were able to afford them. Of course. For those whose interest is piqued, the definitive publication on the North Borneo Postage Dues is by Bruce Marshall; a treasure house of detailed information (See further reading). For clarity, I will again go through them as briefly as possible and set by set.

PD1: 1895-97 Postage Dues Overprints

The first Postage Due set (SG D1-D11) has a value range from 2c to 24c, but the two and three cents are duplicated with different colours. The main perforation is 14.5 to 15, but of course the variants can be found littered all the way through the set. The 5c Great Argus (SG D5) can also be found perforated 13.5 to 14 (D5d) and 13.5 to 14/compound 12 to 13 (D5e). See figure 8 right for image.



Fig.8 – 1895/7 5c Great Argus (SG D5)

Other variants for the five cent include a stop printed after "DUE" (D5b), an issue printed double (D5a), and also one with the overprint double (D5c) as well as the 13.5-14 perforation printed double (D5da). I won't give you catalogue prices. They all involve conversations with your bank manager. A full simplified listing of the issues is provided in table 5 below:-

Table.5 – 1895-97 Postage Due Issues (simplified)

Value	Design	Colour	SG.
2c	Sambar stag	Black & rose lake	D1
2c	Sambar stag	Black & lake	D2
3c	Sago palm	Olive green & dull purple	D3
3c	Sago palm	Olive green & violet	D4
5c	Great Argus	Black & vermillion	D5
6c	Company arms	Black & bistre brown	D6
8c	Malay dhow	Black & dull purple	D7
12c	Estuarine crocodile	Black & blue	D8
12c	Estuarine crocodile	Black & ultramarine	D9
18c	Mount Kinabalu	Black & deep green	D10
24c	Arms with supporters	Blue & rose lake	D11

PD2: 1897-99 Postage Due Overprints

The next postage due set to be issued reflected the change in frame design of 1897 with the languages. Not all the values of that set were utilised, but again there was some duplication in values with small colour changes. Once more there were two 2c and 3c examples, but this time also two 8c, and two versions of the 18c and 24c due to perforations used. In total, there are fourteen basic values in this set, but the plethora of varieties increase that number considerably.

The Great Argus (SG D17) was issued late in this set (1899) with a standard 14.5-15 perforation, but there are also two varieties, one with a perforation of 13.5-14 (D17a) and another of 13.5-14/compound 12-13 (D17b). See figure 9 right for an example of this overprint.

Fig.9 - 1897-99 5c Great Argus (SG D17)



As previously, the overprinting had been undertaken locally and this probably accounts for why they look so crude. It's as if someone has attacked them with a junior John Bull printing kit! Finer examples can be found overprinted by Waterlow and yet again these seem to have been directed by the Company primarily for dealers and not used postally. This seems less the case with the 5c Great Argus, but regrettably not for other values.

PD3: 1901/02 Postage Due Overprints

A small number of the 1897 inscription issues were again overprinted for postage due purposes locally between 1901 and 1902. They can primarily be distinguished from the earlier postage dues through the presence of a full stop after "DUE." They can be found printed vertically or horizontally. See figure 10 right.



Fig.10 – 1901/2 5c Great Argus (SG D28)

Only three values were treated this way, but they included the 5c Great Argus. The other two values though, the 3c and 8c, are duplicated because of colour changes. Table 6 below gives a simplified breakdown.

Table.6 – 1901/02 Postage Due Issues (simplified)

Value	Design	Colour	SG.
3c	Sago palm	Green & rosy mauve	D26
3c	Sago palm	Green & dull mauve	D27
5c	Great Argus	Black & orange vermillion	D28
8c	Malay dhow	Black & brown purple	D29
8c	Malay dhow	Black & brown	D30

The standard perforation given is 13.5-14 but the 5c can also be found in a 14.5-15 variety (SG D28a).

PD4: 1902-12 Postage Due Overprints

The fourth and final outing for these designs as postage due issues is the largest and certainly most complex group. They were introduced for the "BRITISH PROTECTORATE" series and are therefore effectively an overprint on an already overprinted issue. They can be sub-divided into four types, two of which affect the Great Argus stamp.

The first type is overprinted horizontally but has a full stop after "DUE." However, it is only found on one value, the 1 cent issue. The second type is overprinted vertically reading upwards and occurs on five values, including the 5c (SG D34). See figure 11a right. A third version has horizontal overprinting but positioned centrally on each stamp. This is also found with the 5c (SG D41) and indeed occurs on the largest number of values. Also see figure 11b right.



Fig.11a (SG D34) Fig.11b (SG D41)
1902/12 - 5c Great Argus Types

There is a fourth type whereby the overprinting is horizontal but placed at the top of each stamp, but this only affects two values, a 2c and 4c. A simplified breakdown of the distribution of these overprint types across values is provided in table 7.

Table.7 – 1902/12 Simplified Listing of Postage Due Overprint Types

Type	Values	Design	Colour	SG
I	1c	Dyak chief	Black/bistre brown	D31
II	2c	Sambar stag	Black/green	D32
II	3c	Sago Palm	Green/rosy mauve	D33
II	5c	Great Argus	Black/orange vermillion	D34
II	8c	Malay dhow	Black/brown	D35
II	24c	Arms & supporters	Blue/lake	D36
III	1c	Dyak chief	Black/bistre brown	D37
III	2c	Sambar stag	Black/green	D38
III	3c	Sago Palm	Green/rosy mauve	D39
III	4c	Orang Utan	Black/carmine	D40
III	5c	Great Argus	Black/orange vermillion	D41
III	6c	Company arms	Black/bistre brown	D42
III	8c	Malay dhow	Black/brown	D43
III	10c	Sun bear	Brown/slate lilac	D44
III	10c	Sun bear	Brown/slate blue	D45
III	12c	Estuarine crocodile	Black/dull blue	D46
III	16c	Borneo railway train	Green/chestnut	D47
III	18c	Mount Kinabalu	Black/green	D48
III	24c	Arms & supporters	Blue/lake	D49
IV	2c	Sambar stag	Black/green	D50
IV	4c	Orang Utan	Black/carmine	D51

As may be now be readily imagined, there are a riot of perforation varieties running throughout these overprinted types and values, but now in addition to other variables. With the 5c Great Argus, the second overprint type is straightforwardly perforated 14.5-15. End of story. This is not the case with the third overprint type. Here the basic perforation is 13.5-14, but a 14.5-15 version (SG D41b) also exists. And to add to the fun there are examples where the full stop is missing after "PROTECTORATE."

I have already indicated that the postage dues can be expensive. The second overprint type Great Argus is by far the pricier one, catalogued at £350 mint and £190 used, whilst the third overprint type (non-varieties) is cited at £60 mint and just £5.50 used. Varieties of this type are however, somewhat more.

No Great Argus

After 1905 these initial designs were not to be revised, although as we have seen, various overprinted versions continued to be issued for a few further years. But in 1909 it was all change. A wholly new set of designs were introduced, including more bird designs. Sadly though, there was no more Great Argus with its amazing courting display. But let's not despair, for there were still plenty more complexities to follow, as I hope to show in part two of this trip through the philatelic jungles of North Borneo.

Further Reading

- Shipman, L.H. - Stamps and Postal History of North Borneo/Part II (1894-1908). Sarawak Specialist Society. 1979. [Very scarce]
- Marshal, B.A. - A Review of the Overprinted Postage Due Stamps of North Borneo (1895-1931). Sarawak Specialist Society. 2001.
- Gibbons, S. - Commonwealth & Empire Stamps 1840-1970. 119th Edition (2017).
- Bailey, D. - The Pictorial Revolution. Stamp & Coin; January 2018.
- Winchester, J. - One Borneo Every Minute! Blog, Stamp Magazine (circa 2004).

Thanks Mel for another fascinating 'complexity' article. This one in particular will help me sort out my North Borneo Great Argus pheasants and make sure I have them all correctly identified Ed.

Noddy Notes - Articles & News

Ed ... Back in the March 2020 edition of *Flight*, I popped in an article from Steven Ardron "Vagrant Species Part One". The 2nd issue came out in October 2020, and I missed putting it in the December *Flight* - ...apologies, but here it is. *Tristan da Cunha - Vagrant Species Part 2, October 2020*



60p - Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*) occurs throughout the tropics in the Americas. It is a fairly large, slender rail that is fairly closely related to the moorhens that managed to colonise Tristan and Gough. The adults are strikingly coloured, but many of the birds reaching Tristan are much duller juveniles, which are perhaps more likely to get blown off course as they migrate north in autumn from their breeding areas in Uruguay and northern Argentina. They are birds of wetlands and swamps, and their long toes help them walk onto floating vegetation, by distributing their weight. Their diet is varied as they feed on a wide variety of vegetable and animal matter.

Sightings of this bird were quite frequent on Tristan in the second half of the 20th century, with up to 47 in one year, but they have become less common in recent years. Almost all records are from around the settlement Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, where they take shelter in island gardens and surrounding flax. The local name for this bird is 'Guttersnake' presumably for its shiny greeny-blue colour and by the way it swiftly moves through the grass.

£2 - King Penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*) is the second largest species of penguin, smaller, but somewhat similar in appearance to the Emperor Penguin. King Penguins breed on sub-Antarctic islands between 45 and 55°S, with a large population on South Georgia. The total population is estimated to be 2.23 million pairs and is increasing. Like its larger cousin, they lay a single egg which they incubate balanced on their feet, and males are able to store food in their stomachs for more than a month, ready to feed the chick when it hatches. They are prodigious swimmers and divers, regularly diving to 300 m deep and commuting hundreds of kilometres from their colonies to find food for their chick. After breeding, adults disperse vast distances, sometimes venturing well outside their normal range. There was a sighting of a King Penguin on Tristan's beach over decade ago, but they are somewhat more common as vagrants on Gough Island, which being farther south is closer to their normal haunts.



Source: <https://www.tristandc.com/po/stamps202011.php>

Covid Fines for Northern Mockingbird Twitchers

I was reading in the news today (15th February) of the sighting of a **Northern Mockingbird** in the garden of a resident in Exmouth, Devon. He sighted the bird, a rare visitor to our shores, on 6th February, and his tweet of the bird caught the attention of a number of twitchers.

The Northern Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*, is a common, resident bird of North America, but also found in southern Canada, Mexico and the northern Caribbean. Its conservation status is of 'Least Concern'. It has grey to brown upper feathers, a paler belly, with white patches on the tail and wings which are visible during flight.



Image Source: Macauley Library, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Brian McCaffrey (ML308173661)

It is known for its mimicking ability, and is often found in open areas, forest edges, but also forages in grassy land.

It is thought that the bird has not been seen in the UK since 1980.

As for the twitchers who visited Exmouth to see this rare bird Oops, they broke Covid travel restrictions and were all fined !!

Stamps featuring these birds are not numerous, but here are a few examples from the USA, Turks and Caicos, and British Virgin Islands



From the left: USA (1982); Turks & Caicos (1993); and British Virgin Islands (1985).

25-27 MARCH 2021



VIRTUAL
EXHIBITION
2021

Virtual Stampex is again being staged this year, and the Philatelic Traders' Society have announced that registrations are now open for the show.

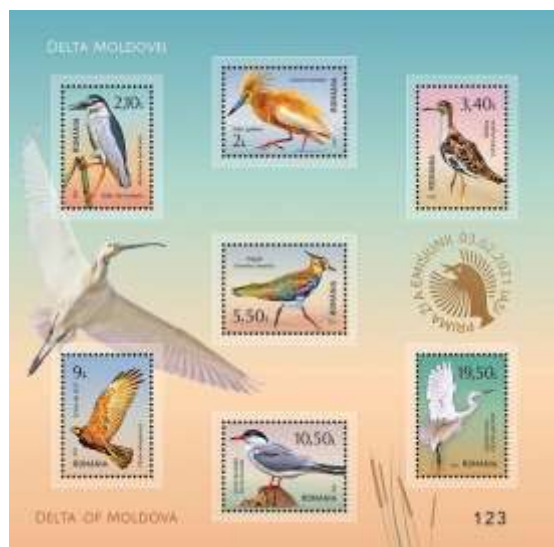
It is reported to be bigger and better than the show in 2020, and to enhance your in-show experience, the organiser's are asking you to tell them your area of interest upon registration. The live show will run for 72 hours from 8am on 25th March with the on demand period finishing towards the end of April.

To register just head to stampex.vfairs.com



Noddy Notes (2) - New Issues by Steven Ardron

Romania - World Wetlands Day



2 February 2021 was World Wetlands Day. The official website for this events is: <https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>

To mark this event, Romania Post has issued a set of seven stamps entitled "Delta of Moldova". The stamps feature: a Squacco Heron, a Black-crowned Night Heron, a Ruff, a Northern Lapwing, a Western Marsh Harrier, a Common Tern and a Little Egret.

Romania Post have printed these stamps in various formats, including a stamp sheetlet which includes all the stamps, a copy of which is shown left (the image is courtesy of www.stampworld.com).

The link to Romania Post's own website (in English) which has background information on this issue is here:

<https://www.romfilatelia.ro/en/delta-of-moldova-2/>

It may well be that other postal authorities around the globe have also commemorated World Wetlands Day so we should perhaps look out for these in the coming months.

Of course, this event - in a year that the UK hosts the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) - has passed Royal Mail by. Instead, we get twelve stamps celebrating a rather weary 40 year old TV comedy programme, with the designs based on film stills!

Polish New Issue - 30/11/2020

Polish Post recently issued this colourful sheetlet of eight stamps featuring four water birds (White Stork, Black Stork, Great Egret and Grey Heron).

According to the Polish Post website:

"The stamps printed using offset, on fluorescent paper. Size of the stamp: 43 x 31,25 mm, with a circulation of 100.000 pcs. Sales block contains 4 pcs. of stamps and 4 tablets."

The link to the Polish Post website is here:

http://filatelistyka.poczta-polska.pl/sklep_en

There is an English language option on the website, but the site itself is somewhat disappointing, as there is not enough information about the stamp issue. Missing is the exact date of issue: I believe that for this sheetlet it was sometime in November/December 2020.



British Antarctic Territory

New Issue - December 2020



The British Antarctic Territory has recently released (16th December 2020) an impressive set of four stamps on the theme of "Antarctic Birds". The four birds featured are:

68p South Polar Skua

78p Antarctic Shag

£1.04 Antarctic Petrel

£1.26 Southern Fulmar.

I have attached below an image of the four stamps, which are

impressive, for the reason that the artwork by designer Andrew Robinson has chosen to show the birds either in flight or in an active pose.

These stamps are available from the Falkland Islands Post Service Limited, which can be found at:

<https://www.falklandstamps.com/bat113-antarctic-birds-set.ir>

Each of the stamps is available singly, in the set of four, or in sheets of 10 stamps. There is also an FDC on which there is a picture of a Snow Petrel. The image of the four stamps is from the Falklands Post website.

Noddy Notes (3) - New Issues by Steven Ardron

Guernsey Definitives - Issue Date 17th February 2021



Source: Guernsey Post Office

Gilly Christmas reports I've got my beady little eye on this set, and should have them by the time Flight goes to print, courtesy of the Guernsey Post Office. Looks a cracking set. Designed by Bridget Yabsley, head of philatelic at Guernsey Post, the stamp sizes are 30mm deep x 30mm wide, and include the following 17 values: 1-10p, 20p, 30p, 40p, 50p, £1, £2 and £4.

Also available are: First Day Covers x2; Gutter Pairs; Sheets of 50 with gutters available on request, and FDC gutter pairs x5.

La Société Guernesiais is a wildlife trust which has been working to conserve Guernsey's natural environment for nearly 140 years. The diversity of the tiny island of Guernsey's natural habitat is simply stunning. It's geographical location and large tidal differences create and support a diverse range of habitats, including: gorse scrub; maritime heath; cliff; grasslands; deciduous woodland; wet meadow; saltmarsh and reed bed.



Taiwan Chunghwa Post - Conservation of Birds

On 8 December 2020, Taiwan Chunghwa Post issued a set of four stamps to celebrate bird conservation. These four stamps feature birds of prey that are found on Taiwan and highlight:

NT\$8 the Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*)
NT\$8 Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)
NT\$10 Crested Goshawk (*Accipiter trivirgatus*)
NT\$28 Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Chi-jen Lai designed the four stamps in this set. Taiwan's Central Engraving and Printing Plant printed them by offset in panes of 18. The border area at the top right hand side of each pane shows additional images of each the featured bird.

I have attached below an image of one of the stamps taken from the Taiwan Chunghwa Post website:



Ascension Island - Definitives 2020

On 22 December 2020, Ascension Island issued a new set of 12 definitive stamps: "Ascension Island Treasures". Three of these (the high values) feature birds:

£1.30 Ascension Island Frigatebird
£2.50 Ascension Island Frigatebird in flight, against the backdrop of Botswainbird Island
£5.00 Wideawake Tern

The image left shows all 12 stamps and is from the Ascension Island Post Office webpage:

<https://www.ascension.gov.ac/product/asc-island-treasures-definitive>

It is not clear whether there is a set of First Day Covers for this issue.

Ascension island has a unique natural ecosystem, and conservation is, therefore, of utmost importance. To find out more, visit their twitter feed

[Ascension Conservation \(@AIGConservation\) / Twitter](https://twitter.com/AIGConservation)

Isle of Anglesey Philatelic Bureau – Cinderella Stamps Puffin Island (Ynys Seiriol)

Where is Puffin Island?



Puffin Island is a small, uninhabited isle located less than a kilometre off the South-Eastern coast of the Isle of Anglesey. Since 1984, it has enjoyed protected conservation status and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Natural Resources Wales has oversight of the land management of Puffin Island and continued conservation of the island.

Image source:

<https://elodietravels.wordpress.com/2017/04/07/anglesey-north-wales-uk/>

The protected land documents from the website of Natural Resources Wales explains why the public authorities decided to designate Puffin Island as an SSSI.

<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/wildlife-and-biodiversity/protected-areas-of-land-and-seas/find-protected-areas-of-land-and-sea/?lang=en>

Essentially, the reason for this status is because it is a site for nesting seabirds which breed either on the rock faces or on the grasslands of

the Island. The birds that are present on the Island include: puffin, guillemot, black guillemot and razorbill; as well as eider duck, shag, fulmar, kittiwake, herring gull, greater black-backed gull and lesser black-backed gull.

However, there is one special feature of Puffin Island: it supports more than 1% of the breeding Great Britain population of cormorants (and 1% of the NW European population). In addition to the bird life, Puffin Island is also home to a rare spider (*Meta bournetii*) and also to grey seals. This wildlife too are key components of the special interest of the site.

The breeding Puffin population, which formerly numbered several thousand pairs, has declined significantly to currently number less than a hundred pairs. However, old records suggest substantial population fluctuations in the past. The main reason for the decline in the population was the presence of introduced brown rats, which were successfully removed in 1998 in an eradication programme. A large gullery dominated by herring gull is also present on the Island.

Image source:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/nature/sites/places/nw/puffin_island.shtml

Cinderella Stamp Issues for Puffin Island

Background

The Isle of Anglesey Philatelic Bureau (<https://angleseystamps.com/>) produces Cinderella stamps for a number of islands in North Wales and Scotland. The Bureau started to produce these Cinderella stamps in 2015 and amongst the collection, is a small range of stamps that feature birds. All of these bird stamps are in the name of Puffin Island.

I have included images of these stamps from my recently acquired collection of these issues, which I bought because I liked both the designs and the quality of the stamp production. These issues are clearly intended as, and marketed as, Cinderella stamps, i.e., rather than being used to collect fees for local carriage, as a local (island) postal service.

Puffin Island Birds - March 2016 Issue

The first issues for Puffin Island date from 20 March 2016 and consisted of four stamps featuring:

A Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

A Puffin (*Fratercula artica*)

A Gannet

A Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

On 11 January 2021, La Poste (France), as part of a stamp set on island birds, issued a sheetlet of 15 stamps featuring the Razorbill (literally "Torda Penguin" in French).



Cinderella Stamps from Puffin Island (2)

The four stamps are available in a strip of four, both in perforate and imperforate format. The imperforate set is from my collection.



Image source:

<https://anglseystamps.com/puffin-island/>



There are also two first day covers available, one of which I have included below, which shows two of the stamps (Puffin and Razorbill).

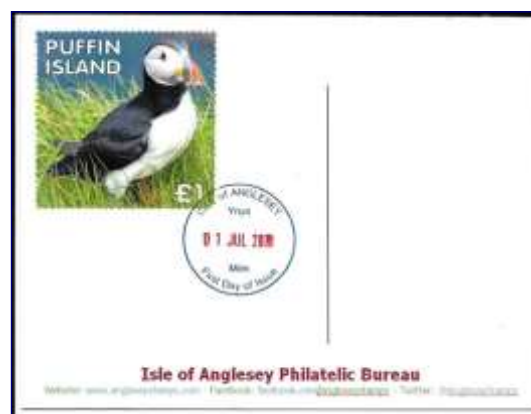
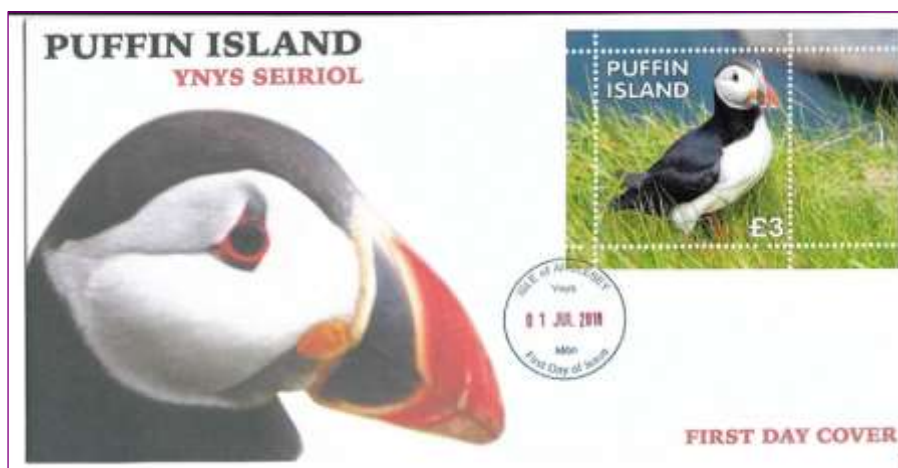


2018 Puffin Island – Puffin Stamp

In 2018, the Isle of Anglesey Philatelic Bureau issued two stamps featuring the same image of a Puffin, in the values of £1 and £3 (The photographic images of the Puffin were by Terry Marsh ©). The £3 value is printed in stamp sheetlet format. On this occasion, the two identical stamps include reference to Puffin Island in English, in contrast to the earlier issue where the Island is named in Welsh. Both the stamps were available in perforate and imperforate format.

The £3 stamp sheetlet First Day Cover is illustrated below left:

The £1 value was also available on a postcard, which displays the same image as the stamp on the front, below:



Cinderella Stamps from Puffin Island (3)



2021 Definitive Stamps

In January this year, Anglesey Stamps issued a set of 10 definitive stamps for Puffin Island, which unsurprisingly feature the Puffin in a single design but in four colours (Red, Blue, Green and Brown).

The higher values (£5, £2, £1) are slightly larger than the lower values, at 36mm high x 34 mm wide. The lower values are square, at 32mm each side. Once again, these stamps are available in perforate or imperforate format.

The Visit Anglesey website states that:

"Puffins were once common on the island, although they are today quite scarce. On the occasions when they breed here, they lay their eggs in cracks between the rocks, as the island's craggy substrate prevents them from digging burrows in which to nest, as is their more common habit."

<https://www.visitanglesey.co.uk/en/things-to-do/activities/wildlife-penmon-and-puffin-island/#.YBb6IQj7TIV>

The same website also states that the Puffin is common on Anglesey at South Stack, located 3 miles west of Holyhead in the North-Western part of the coast of the Isle, on Holy Island. Here, the Puffins feed on sand eels, their main source of food in this locality.

The Isle of Anglesey Philatelic Bureau has issued some other stamps featuring birds, which are:

2019 Isle of Anglesey (Ynys Môn) – Christmas



Image source:

<https://angleseystamps.com/anglesey-stamp-sets/>

2017 Isle of Anglesey (Ynys Môn) – Garden Birds

The four stamps (each at £1 value) feature:

- A Blackbird;
- A Blue Tit;
- A Great Tit; and
- A Robin



Thanks for your article Steven. It's nice to have a piece on Cinderella stamps, the first since I have been the Editor of Flight, and adds some variety to the material..... Ed.

Lords a-Leaping

Not long after I read Carol Mitchell's article on the "Twelve Days of Christmas" in the December 2020 edition of "Flight", I received a similar version in a Christmas message from the RSPB. For the six verses that do not refer to birds in the original song, the RSPB chose four alternatives to Carol's. It was the RSPB choice for Ten Lords a-Leaping which caught my attention, however. Instead of the black grouse cock chosen by Carol, its choice was the male ruff in the pomp of its breeding plumage.

As with the black grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*) and its larger wood grouse cousin, the capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), the male ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) uses the flutter jump in the course of the lek as one of its aggressive display techniques and undoubtedly all three of our UK lekking birds would thus qualify as candidates for the frolicking noblemen of the tenth verse of the Christmas carol. Of course, after 170 years of absence, the breeding great bustard (*Otis tarda*) on Salisbury plain may count as a fourth UK lekking bird but male great bustards do not flutter jump in their displays.



Fig 1. Two Eurasian blackcocks flutter jumping in the course of their joust at a lek on a forest fringe in Belarus. Other blackcocks are strutting with their tail underfeathers and eye wattles prominent. No grey hens are visible but they are undoubtedly watching from the trees nearby.

Lekking species

Flutter jumping categorises the frequently violent male-to-male contests which take place at the leks of these particular birds. We should not forget, however, that there are several other species across the world whose males assemble at a lek in the breeding season, and which may involve either similar male to male directed displays or, conversely, an aesthetic display of sight, sound and movement which is directed at the females present. Flutter jumping may sometimes be present, with or without inter-male aggression.

In fact, not only birds, but a surprising variety of species of animals generally engage in lekking as the means of competing to mate with as many of the local females as possible. Many ungulates, from rutting deer to giraffes, participate but other lekking vertebrates include Atlantic cod, bullfrogs, the lesser short-tailed bat of New Zealand and the harbour seal. Leks are also used by some arthropod invertebrates such as some wasps and crabs.

The full list of bird families, from which some species display at a lek, includes the grouse (Tetraonidae), sandpipers (Scolopacidae), bustards (Otidae), New Zealand parrots (Strigopidae), cotingas (Cotingidae), manakins (Pipridae), bulbuls (Pycnonotidae), weavers (Ploceidae), indigobirds (Viduidae) and birds of paradise (Paradisaeidae).

Of these, the family with the greatest proportion of lekking species is the Bustards, followed by the Birds of Paradise and the Manakins. In the case of the Bulbuls and Weavers, only one out of the families of 138 species and 116 species respectively uses the lek. However, information on many species, especially forest dwelling passerines, is not comprehensive.



Portugal 1995



Papau New Guinea
1965



Belize 1977

Fig 2. The great bustard (*Otis tarda*), the lesser bird of paradise (*Paradisaea minor*) and the red capped Manakin (*Ceratoprya mentalis*) are typical of three bird families in which the majority of species make use of the lek.

The purpose of the lek

Lekking has been subject of extensive research and the conclusion generally is that, whatever technique is used, the purpose is to allow females to exercise choice and not for males to fight for an assumed right amongst themselves to mate with the local females. The outcomes of a lek where an alpha male physically dominates his rivals and of one where the best endowed male with plumage, display techniques or song attracts the most females to join him, are the same. The majority of females choose to mate with the 'winner'. A lek is generally defined as the place, used year after year, where a deliberate assembly of males takes place for mating display or combat.

Lekking Birds (2)

Graham U'ren

It may take the classic form of close clustering of courts or stations for displaying, with the dominant male or males taking centre, sometimes elevated, positions. It may also take the form of a dispersed or exploded lek, where the males display individually, or with support from subordinate males at stations which are far apart but within either sight or sound of each other. Either way, it is the females which move from place to place to find a male that attracts them and the males will mate with as many as are interested. The lek may take place on the ground or in the forest canopy, or both.

In every case, the males of lekking species take no part in incubating eggs and rearing chicks. Research re-enforces the notion that the males' share of the division of the labour of breeding, and hence of expending energy, is in hyping themselves up and performing at the lek, in a few cases over a long period of time, months even, saving the females the trouble of searching individually for a mate, with their share of the work to follow thereafter.

Bird Leks on stamps

Examples of leks are not easy to find on stamps and flutter jumping by birds at the lek even more difficult. Two illustrations are included here for the Eurasian black grouse flutter jumping but it is not clear for other species on stamps. There are a few stamps from most of the bird families involved which show obvious male to male aggression at the lek but there are far more which show males from those families which mainly display to the females and not to other males, as these tend to be some of the most spectacularly plumaged birds on the planet, making an attractive image for the stamp.

Grouse

Twelve of the 17 species of Tetraonidae engage in lekking, while the other 5 are monogamous. Of the latter, however, the male hazel grouse (*Tetrastes bonasia*) performs flutter jumps during its courtship. Lekking species including all four species of wood grouse. I have been fortunate to be able to observe leks from time to time of both our native wood grouse. Like the blackcocks, the cock capercaillies assemble in the chill of an April dawn to engage in their spectacular lek to win the hearts of the much smaller local hens. While the black grouse lek is found in open ground beyond the forest fringes, the capercaillie chooses a forest glade. Some consider that the capercaillie uses an intermediate form of lek as it is semi dispersed and takes

place near the conjunction of several large feeding territories, suggesting that its lek is also a territorial defence ritual.

The blackcocks assemble in the lek site while capercaillies start their display from a tree at the edge of the lek site before descending to strut on the ground. Each species has its own lekking noises, bubbling and cooing in the case of the blackcock or popping and clicking noises in the case of the cock capercaillie. One to one physical jousting is eventually engaged with a view to occupying the centre of the lek as the alpha male. While the word 'lek' may come from a Scandinavian word for 'play', a grouse lek is usually anything but a place for play.



Finland 2003
Czech Rep 2011 (right)



Azerbaijan 1994

Fig 3. Western capercaillie, Eurasian and Caucasian blackcock (*Tetrao mlokosiewiczi*) at the lek

The image on the Finland stamp, a painting by Ferdinand von Wright of Scots descent, is of two cock 'capers' squaring up to each other, while a hen watches from the shadows of the forest. There are even feathers strewn on the ground which indicates that this is a serious fight.



Penryn 1985



Canada 2016 (centre) and 1980 (right)



Fig 4. Other grouse species which lek include the sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), the sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) and the greater prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*).

Sandpipers

There are three species of Scolopacidae which are known to lek. The rest are monogamous; Wilson's phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) even flutters its wings to indicate that it is NOT available for mating.

In the case of the Ruff, the two main plumage variants for mating males are inherited but over 80% of those which stake territories or courts at the heart of the lek are dark or chestnut-coloured birds while the other "satellite" birds which have no court and join the fringes in the hope of mating with a female are mainly of the white plumage variant. The Netherlands stamp shown here certainly shows two puffed up male Ruff in a stand-off at a lek, while a (smaller) female awaits.

The great snipe (*Gallinago media*) does not use the aerial displays or drumming which is so typical of its near cousins. The males join the lek after sunset and occupy small mounds on the marshlands where they face the other males towards the centre of the lek, stand on tip toes, sometimes jumping, hunch their shoulders, cock their tails to show white side feathers and give a whistling call. The females generally mate with the more dominant males at the centre of the lek.

There is no stamp of the third lekking sandpiper, the buff-breasted sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*), which breeds in the North American Arctic. The males perform without aggression but with some flutter jumping.

Lekking Birds (3)

Graham U'ren



Fig 5. The Ruff and the great snipe in typical postures at the lek. The snipe image is from a pre-stamped card featuring the Biebrza National Park, a prolific marsh breeding habitat.

Netherlands 1984 (far left)

Bustards

The majority of the 44 species of Otididae use dispersed or “exploded” leks but the habits of some species are still sketchily known. While all Palearctic, Indian and Australian species lek, at least 5 of the African species are monogamous and do not, protecting their territories all year.

In ten years, the reintroduced great bustards on Salisbury plain have established successful breeding and males create their dispersed lek with each seeking to occupy an elevated site to show off his plumage, enhanced by the extreme puffing out of his gular, or throat sac (see Fig 2). While these huge birds, again much larger than the females, rarely fight or jump, they perform spectacular displays. The Australian bustard (*Ardeotis australis*) is more solitary in its behaviour but still performs within sight and sound of other males to allow the females to compare in their choice.



Niger 1998



Bahrain 1990



Botswana 2017

Fig 6. Bustards in various modes of lek display - great Indian bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), McQueen's bustard (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*) and Denham's bustard (*Neotis denhami*)

Cotingas

The breeding habits of many of the 71 species of Cotingidae are still unknown as so many of these passerine species live high in the tropical forest canopies of South and Central America. It is estimated that 50% may use the lek and hence the males take no part in rearing the young. The best evidence comes from the Guianan Cock of the Rock (*Rupicola rupicola*) of which up to 50 males may attend a lek on the forest floor. It is compact, with each male creating a cleared court which he keeps tidy. The males start by sitting in low branches until females appear when they jump down to their own court to commence a silent routine, including some flutter jumping (see Fig 7). There is little aggression unless a male trespasses on another court. The process may continue for several days before females make their choice.



Fig 7. Some Andean cock of the rock attend a canopy lek; a Guianan cock of the rock flutter jumps; a bearded bellbird (*Rupicola peruvianus*) and an ornate umbrella bird (*Cephalopterus ornatus*) display their unusual assets.

The lek of the Andean Cock of the Rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*) is similar but it is located off the ground, sometimes high in the trees, where the courts are on individual branches which are stripped of leaves to maintain visibility for the watching females. Other canopy lekking species include the bellbirds and umbrella birds.

Manakins

As with the Cotingidae, the Pipridae are South American forest passerines about which information on breeding is sometimes lacking. It is thought that most of the 60 species lek and that there is no pair bonding. Although in the canopy, the lek takes place at the same location every year. The males are generally brightly coloured but use movement and calling rather than showing off plumage to attract females.

Instead of competing with the few dominant males, the subordinate (or beta) males actually assist a dominant male. Such males may delay their maturity until they are able to replace an experienced male after several years.

Females appear to be difficult to stimulate and dominant males spend much time at the lek during daylight hours. In the case of the crimson hooded or wire tailed manakins (*Pipra aureola* and *Pipra filicauda*), beta males may perform a coordinated display around an alpha male to ensure a female is adequately stimulated.

The red capped (Fig 2) and golden headed manakins (*Ceratopipra erythrocephala*) (below) exemplify the complexity of displays that characterise the manakins. When a female enters the lek and perches on a display branch, the alpha male commences a five phase display – i) ‘darting back and forth’ with legs stretched to show off thigh feathers, ii) rapid flights between branches with an ‘about face’ on landing, iii) a ‘backward slide’ along the branch with tail up until it changes to raised wings, iv) upright static posture, and v) display flight and return from a higher branch.

The long tailed manakin (*Chiroxiphia linearis*) is one of a few species with agile jump dances and even cartwheels.



Golden-headed Manakin



Fig 8. Crimson hooded, wire tailed, and long tailed manakins

Weavers

The evolution of the Ploceidae may explain why the lekking of the Jackson's widowbird (*Euplectes jacksoni*), the sole member to use the lek, is not so anomalous. With a wide range of behaviours developing over time from monogamy to aspects of polygyny, the development of lekking can be seen as a logical extreme. Male Jackson's widowbirds display mainly by repeated leaping to about 1 metre off the ground at their dancing ground lek, which females visit to select a mate, after which they go off to nest and have no further contact with the male.

Indigobirds

The principal feature of the breeding of members of the Viduidae family is that they are all brood parasites, sometimes species specific, as the village indigobird (*Vidua chalybeata*), for example, is to the red billed firefinch, so they are promiscuous and both sexes can avoid the duties of nest building as well as brood rearing. The ten species of indigobird in the 21 species family engage in some form of lekking. The female is largely responsible for finding the host nest and detecting when the host will breed, so that she can synchronise her own mating.

Meantime, the males start to sing from selected call sites. The village indigobird exemplifies this version of dispersed lekking activity in which dominant singing males are visited by inexperienced males, which helps to draw the attention of the females. When a female lands on a call site, the male starts a bobbing and leaping performance until mating occurs.



Fig 9. Jackson's widowbird and the village indigobird

Birds of Paradise

Of the 42 species of Paradisaeidae, six are known to be monogamous while little is known about the breeding habits of some of the others which reside high in the New Guinea forests and which may have very varied breeding seasons. However, there is most certainty about the lekking behaviour of the 26 plumed species – the flagbirds, riflebirds, sicklebills and sickletails.

Leks vary considerably in nature from the classic form to varying degrees of dispersal on the ground and in the canopy. With the most spectacular variety of plumage and courtship behaviour in the bird world, lekking involves non-aggressive display by dominant males which are sometimes accompanied by attendant males in subadult plumage.

While the twelve wired bird of paradise (*Seleucidis melanoleucus*) has its lek high above the ground, the five species of parotia along with the magnificent and Wilson's birds of paradise (*Cicinnurus magnificus* and *Cicinnurus respublica*) clear their display courts on the forest floor with regular 'gardening'. The parotias add 'decoration' around the edges with anything they can find, including dung or stones. Victoria's riflebird (*Ptiloris victoriae*), on the other hand, always displays from the top of the same tree stump and its gape is an essential part of its display (see Fig. 10).

The most classic form of compact lek is used by seven species including the standardwing, lesser and greater birds of paradise (*Semioptera wallacii*, *Paradisaea minor* and *Paradisaea apoda*). Up to 40 males may hold positions within 1 metre of each other on a single tree in the canopy and return to the same location every year.

The magnificent bird of paradise typifies birds which use their plumage to best effect with four distinct stages to its display – back display, breast display, silent cape display and dance display, the last of which takes place once the female is within half a metre. However, it is Carola's parotia (*Parotia carolae*) which has the greatest complexity of all, with 58 different elements to its display.



Fig 10. Magnificent bird of paradise, Victoria's Riflebird, Twelve wired bird of paradise and standardwing bird of paradise in typical display modes and lek configuration



Fig 11. The greater lophorina (*Lophorina superba*) shows the variety in its repertoire with three display modes on three different stamps. Right - Carola's Parotia has the most complex display of any bird.

The Kakapo - A Flightless Lek

The kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*), one of three members of the Strigopidae or New Zealand parrots, has its own version of the lek. Unable to leave the ground to perform jumps or flights, this unique parrot uses sound in an exploded lek, directed at females from near and far. Several males clear an area of vegetation and then each digs a shallow bowl with some short tracks leading to it. This 'track and bowl system' forms a communal display arena, sometimes stretching over 200 metres.

Each male starts by entering a kind of trance and puffs its chest out to increase its thoracic capacity. Then it starts to make a loud booming noise every few seconds for up to a minute at a time, after which it deflates and listens for any responses, only to resume booming again. The bowl acts as a resonating chamber to amplify the noise which travels a considerable distance. It may keep up this booming all night, every night for several months, at times mixed with higher pitched noises. Although the other members of this family, the kaka and the kea, are also promiscuous, the Kakapo probably finds the lek system convenient as it does not breed every year, dependent on the food supply of mountain beech mast from the previous year.



Fig. 13 Kakapo

Bulbuls and the ultimate conundrum

The only species in a family (Pycnonotidae) more noted for cooperative breeding, the Yellow-whiskered Greenbul (*Eurillas latirostris*) for which there as yet is no stamp, is known to be polygynous with lek-like male assemblies, especially in the west Africa part of its range where the density of birds is high. Towards the east of the continent, however, conditions are different and the bird is monogamous.

The question remains of why lekking behaviour develops in any species, especially when it may not always apply, as with this bulbul species. The answer depends on whether we yet fully understand the benefits. In a lekking reproductive system, what males can signal to females is limited, as they provide no resources to females during nest building and brooding nor parental care to the offspring, suggesting that the best a female gains is the indirect benefit from her choice in the form of good genes for her offspring. There may be other benefits, however, which are still the subject of research, such as greater protection from predation. Clearly, from the variety of lekking behaviours that can be found among bird families and, indeed, species, this is one of the most fascinating aspects of bird social life.

POSTSCRIPT

Mobile phones as lekking devices among human males!

In writing this piece, I stumbled on an abstract of a research report, from which I quote – "This study investigated the use of mobile telephones by males and females in a public bar frequented by professional people. We found that, unlike women, men who possess mobile telephones more often publicly display them, and that these displays were related to the number of men in a social group, but not the number of women.....This competitive environment is suggested to be akin to a lek mating system in which males aggregate and actively display their qualities to females who assess males on a number of dimensions". However, the researchers did not report on the incidence of leaping!

Interesting Bird Facts - Swifts

John Graham



When I was tidying up all my 'Flight' folders on my laptop recently, I came across This article that member John Graham must have sent me ages ago.

John, huge apologies are due to you, but as they say, better late than never!

Belgium 2007

- All birds have fleas and feather lice or similar parasites. However, the swift's are so different to those of other species, that it supports the fact that they separated from other bird species a very long time ago. Their parasites have evolved with them.
- Swifts were once thought to hibernate over winter –like swallows, which were believed to hibernate in mud below ponds. Even the naturalist Gilbert White in mid 18C got labourers to dig up likely spots to see if he could find any. He heard tales of swifts being found alive but torpid in church towers in early spring.
- Swifts almost never land except at their nest sites doing everything on the wing
- A French Airman in the 1914-18 war glided down with engines off behind enemy lines. At 10,000 feet he found himself amongst birds apparently motionless. One of them was caught in the machine on the following day, and was found to be an adult male swift.
- Not many predators can catch a swift, (hobbies may take a few and so may kestrels, tawny owls and barn owls). However, it's likely that many of the swifts they manage to eat were weak for other reasons eg starvation. Very few mammals ever catch one, except perhaps rats or weasels that can climb to nests.
- Swifts may seem to bathe by flying relatively slowly through falling rain.
- In Tuscany people used to eat young ones, even building special towers to house them –the swift equivalent of a dovecot. Apparently they are delicious! Don't try this at home...
- The swift probably eats more species of animals (small insects and spiders) than any other British bird. David Lack recorded over 312, and reckoned there were more. They take items 2 -10mm long.
- Swifts have been known to hunt at about 25 miles an hour.
- Swifts can be quite selective about what they catch. One was found to have caught only stingless drones around bee hives, and to have neatly dodged all the females, which had stings.
- It seems they really can mate on the wing - but they will also mate in their nest holes. No other bird is known to mate on the wing (apart from some other swift species).
- Nesting material is collected on the wing (it has to be), so they can only use what they can find in the air, and were once recorded using a live butterfly!
- The weight of a swifts egg is about one-twelfth the weight of the female, approx 3.5 grams.
- Swifts have a clever adaptation. Food can be scarce in bad weather, and the chicks can go cold and torpid and survive for days without food, then regain weight rapidly once supplies resume. Most baby birds can't do this and would simply die within hours.



Finland 1952



Ascension 1998



Jersey 2011



Belarus 2012

IMPACT OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

The first mammalian predators introduced to New Zealand probably were Polynesian Rats and dogs brought by Māori colonisers, but the introduction of more destructive predators, especially pigs, cats, possums and mustelids accompanied European settlement, and their depredations were compounded by widespread loss or degradation of habitat as native forests were cleared for agricultural development. Extinctions of bird species continued unabated or even accelerated. Prominent among the species lost at this time was the Laughing Owl *Sceloglaux albifacies*, which is depicted on the 80c stamp in the 1996 Extinct Birds issue, and is known from 53 skins, three partial skeletons and subfossil remains of about 100 individuals.



Figure 1: On the 80c stamp in the 1996 Extinct Birds issue is depicted a Laughing Owl in flight.

Also preserved are 19 eggs and one nest. These midsized owls were predominantly dark brown streaked buff-yellow, paler on the underparts, with a prominent facial disk that was pale greyish-brown streaked darker, and bristly pale yellow feathers covered the legs. At the time of European settlement they were widespread on North, South and Stewart Islands, showing a preference for open areas and margins of forests and scrubland, though also frequenting the interior of drier forest, but were absent from moist forests with high rainfall.

Anecdotal accounts indicate that Laughing Owls were sedentary, each pair occupying a home range probably centred on the nesting site. They were strong fliers and hunted at night, though apparently also were crepuscular, and during the day roosted in dry crevices in rocky cliffs or on rock ledges. The loud, distinctive *cack-cack-cack* call, which gives the bird its name, was heard most frequently at dusk or during rainy nights, and captive birds were heard to emit a loud, hailing *cooe* in the evening. An incubating female gave a low twitter when offered food by its

mate.

Information on the diet comes mostly from accumulations of prey remnants found under roosting sites. Adults ate mainly large invertebrates and large vertebrates, with birds as large as petrels and the New Zealand Pigeon *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae* being taken. After their introduction, Polynesian Rats were an important prey item, and birds were seen on the ground searching for large earthworms. Other recorded prey items include bats, reptiles, especially geckos and Tuatara *Sphenodon punctatus*, amphibians, and large insects, mainly beetles. In his restoration painting, Paul Martinson depicts a Laughing Owl holding a ground-dwelling Lesser Short-tailed Bat *Mystacina tuberculata*, which is identified as its common prey. Subfossil remains of extinct Stout-legged Wrens *Pachyplichas yaldwyni* also have been recovered from prey accumulations.



Figure 2: In a painting by Paul Martinson, a Laughing Owl is depicted with its common prey - a ground-dwelling Lesser Short-tailed Bat.

Egg-laying was recorded during September to November. Nests normally were in sheltered, draft-free rock crevices or caves, mostly in cliff-faces or at the base of a cliff, often with a north-westerly aspect, and in darkness at 1-5m from the entrance. Less commonly, nests were on the ground under boulders and possibly in tree hollows. It seems that sites often were traditional, being reused in successive seasons. One known site was abandoned at, or shortly after the surrounding forest was cleared, and another known site in farmland was occupied annually until the adults

An examined nest comprised a small quantity of dried grasses, and another consisted of uprooted perennial herbs and *Scirpus* sedges intermixed with remains of prey. A normal clutch comprised two broadly-elliptical cream-white eggs measuring about 47.0 x 39.0mm. Incubation of 25 days duration was undertaken by the female while being fed at the nest by the male. Newly-hatched chicks were sparsely covered with yellowish-white down, but there is no information on time spent in the nest before fledging.

Laughing Owls were fairly common and widespread, particularly in the South Island, until the mid 1800s, but declined rapidly thereafter. Tennyson points out that their plight became quite obvious in about 1880, but received little attention and no action was taken in 1885 when it was suggested that the species be given protection on an island reserve. Several birds were held in captivity, including one lonely female that laid several eggs during her 18 years in captivity in the Acclimatisation Society Gardens in Christchurch, but no attempt was made to breed them. The last confirmed record was of a freshly dead bird found in 1914.

I have little doubt that if the same effort now devoted to saving endangered species by New Zealand wildlife authorities had been given to the Laughing Owl it could have been saved from extinction. Its disappearance has been attributed to the deliberate introduction of mustelids in the 1880s to control rabbits, and nests certainly would have been highly vulnerable to these agile predators. Widespread land clearance also would have impacted severely on local populations.

Because of an extraordinary difference in bill morphology between the sexes, not matched in any other known bird, the Huia *Heteralocha acutirostris* probably is the most publicised of New Zealand's extinct birds, and is depicted on the \$1.20 stamp in the 1996 Endangered Birds issue.



Figure 3: The Huia is the most publicised of New Zealand's extinct birds, and a pair is depicted on the \$1.20 stamp in the 1996 Extinct Birds issue.

Approximately 55cm in length and weighing about 400g, it was the largest of the New Zealand wattlebirds, a group of starling-like songbirds in the endemic family Callaeidae. The overall plumage was black with a strong green and bluish-purple sheen, and the long tail was broadly tipped white. The cream-white bill with bluish-grey at the base was slightly decurved and 55mm in length in the male, but strongly decurved and 100mm long in the female, and in both sexes a bright orange fleshy wattle was attached at the base of each side of the bill.



Figure 4: An extraordinary sexual difference in bill morphology is the most prominent characteristic of the Huia, and is well illustrated in a painting by Paul Martinson.

The long legs were bluish-grey. Juveniles were duller brownish-black and wattles at the base of the bill were white. There are at least 422 specimens in museums, as well as 10 complete skeletons, 39 partial skeletons, one nest, one egg, and subfossil remains recovered at 19 sites.

Huia are known only from North Island, where they frequented mainly lowland and montane forests with a dense understorey. They usually were encountered in pairs or less commonly in small groups, possibly family parties, or singly. They probably were sedentary and territorial, particularly during the breeding season. One male was known to remain for several years in the same area of the Ruahine Range, in the south of the island. Sexes remained close together, maintaining contact with a soft twittering, and so indicating a lifelong pair-bond. While hopping from branch to branch, one captive pair fanned their tails and caressed bills while emitting the low twittering contact notes.

They were poor fliers, seldom flying above the canopy, but were quite agile when moving quickly through the forest by hopping or bounding along branches or from one branch to the next, and with opened wings reputedly were able to make long leaps from one tree to the next. They moved across the ground with the same hopping actions. They were among the first birds to call at sunrise, when the deep melodious whistling notes were given with the head and neck stretched upward and the bill pointing at 30-45° from vertical.

The diet comprised insects and their larvae, mostly taken from dead or decaying timber, under bark or amidst lichen and moss, supplemented with fruits and vegetable matter. Reports claimed that the birds were specialist predators of larvae of huhu beetles *Prionoplis reticularis*, and when these were given to captive birds each grub was taken to a perch to be held under a foot while the head was torn away and discarded before the body was swallowed whole.

Males used their shorter bill in a woodpecker-like manner to chisel into rotten wood or prise off bark to extract insects and wood-boring larvae, while the longer, more decurved bill of females was suited to probing into deeper holes and crevices for prey.

It has been suggested that the marked sexual divergence in bill structure and associated foraging techniques may have allowed pairs to exploit a wider range of food sources in different microhabitats, so maximising quantities of food available within a territory. When clinging to the face of a tree trunk or stump, a bird pressed its tail against the surface for support. Tennyson discounts reports of the sexes feeding cooperatively, as is quoted by Oliver from an account by J M Wright of a pair helping each other to obtain wetas (large wingless crickets) from living wood:

"I have watched them in pairs hunting for wetas. The male would tear away the outer part of a green sapling. The female then tried to retrieve the weta with her long, slender bill. If not successful she would stand back while the male tried to enlarge the hole. Unless the tree was a maire [Nestegis sp.] the birds would generally succeed, and would then fly away with the weta."

Eggs were recorded in October and nestlings in November, while accounts in the early literature report a breeding season extending from September to February. Oliver notes that nest-sites recorded by observers were on or near the ground, usually at the base of a large tree,

on a covered ledge in an old rata tree *Metrosideros robusta*, and in a depression formed at the top of a truncated tree where sheltered underneath a mass of overhanging growth.

Another record is of a nest in a large tree hollow at a height of 5.5m above the ground. In the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, is a nest collected near the Manawatu River, and it is described by Oliver as having a base of *Astelia* leaves and a few sticks, on which is built sides of quite large sticks and *Astelia* leaves with a finer lining of the same material, and the overall diameter was about 36cm with an inner cup measuring approximately 18cm across and 6.5cm deep. A normal clutch comprised 2 to 4 eggs, which measured approximately 37.0 × 27.0mm, and were stone-grey finely spotted or speckled purplish-grey. Incubation is said to have been undertaken mainly or only by the female, but the period is not known and claims that the sitting female was fed by the male lack evidence.

Huia were specialists and, like all specialist species, would have been highly vulnerable to both primary pressures, especially habitat loss or degradation, and secondary pressures, including hunting. Subfossil remains indicate that they were widespread and common before the arrival of Māori voyagers, but thereafter the range contracted and numbers declined, I strongly suspect that persecution by Māori hunters triggered this decline.

Oliver notes that the tail-feathers were highly prized, being worn in the hair by chiefs or traded, often over long distances, with chiefs of other tribes. With the wings and feet removed, but the bill and wattles intact, skins were pegged out to be dried before fires, and then were worn as ornaments attached to the ears, or again were kept as valued items for trade.

The birds were caught by attracting them with imitations of the call and, with the aid of a long pole, sometimes baited with insect larvae, a slip noose was placed over the head. As early as 1845 there were warnings that Huia were becoming increasingly scarce and could disappear, but very little action was taken to arrest the decline and plans to translocate birds to Kapiti and Little Barrier island reserves never eventuated. There was a report from the noted naturalist and author, Walter Buller that 11 Māori hunters took 646 skins during one month in 1863, and there was another report of more than 600 birds being killed in central Wellington Province in 1874.

Huia were given legal protection in 1892, but there was little or no enforcement and birds continued to be killed. A dramatic rise in demand for tail-feathers, both nationally and internationally, is said to have occurred when a fashion developed after a Māori guide placed one in the hat-band of the visiting Duke of York at Rotorua in 1902.

With much higher prices being paid for tail-feathers widespread hunting increased, and there were reports of hundreds of birds being killed by regularly organised hunting parties and by workers at road or rail construction camps. This wanton destruction quickly brought about extinction of the species, and Oliver notes that the last authentic record dates from 28 December 1907, when there was a sighting of two females and a male. Tennyson points out that there are credible reports of birds persisting until the mid-1920s in the southern Tararua Range, in the Wellington region, and possibly at several other places.

Because of an external semblance to *Turdus* thrushes from the Northern Hemisphere, especially the introduced Song Thrush *T. philomelos*, the extinct piopios were known to early colonists as 'native thrushes', but relationships of these midsized songbirds have long been debated, with alliances to thrushes, bowerbirds and pachycephalid whistlers being advanced in ornithological literature.

It was suggested also that they had no close relatives, but recent studies have determined that they belong with the Old World orioles in the family Orioliidae. When the Extinct Birds stamps were issued populations on the North and South Islands were treated as a single species, but there are obvious differences and now the two populations are recognised as separate species.



Figure 5: Readily identified by a prominent streaking on its underparts, the South Island Piopio is depicted on the \$1 stamp in the 1996 Extinct Birds issue. At the time of the Stamp issue, it was separated only subspecifically from the North Island Piopio, which has unstreaked underparts, but now each is considered to be a separate species.

Approximately 26cm in length and weighing about 100g, they had a long tail, short, stout bill, long legs, and a predominantly brown plumage colouration. Easily identified by its boldly streaked underparts, the South Island Piopio *Turnagra capensis* is the species depicted on the \$1 stamp in the Extinct Birds issue. The upperparts, including the tail, were uniformly darker brown with rufous-brown margins to the wing-coverts. Birds on Stephens Island were smaller and sometimes are differentiated subspecifically. The North Island Piopio *T. tanagra* lacked streaking on the underparts, which were white to buff-white with greyish-brown on the lower breast.

At the time of European settlement both species were said to be widespread in forests up to the alpine zone, with a preference for forests and scrublands near to water. They frequented the undergrowth more than mid or upper levels, and spent much time on the ground, moving about with a characteristically hopping action while scratching with the bill and feet amidst fallen leaves and groundcover vegetation in search of food.

They usually were encountered in pairs, so probably were territorial, and were inquisitive and tame, readily responding to imitations of their calls. When approaching to investigate an unusual sound or the presence of an observer, a bird would spread its tail and move sideways along a branch, alternately turning its body right and left.

Two reports describe groups of 12 and 20 South Island Piopios taking food from the hand while foraging around campsites. Vocalisation was most prevalent in the early to mid morning, lasting later in the morning than calling from other species, and again in the afternoon or evening, sometimes continuing after nightfall.

Giving these birds a reputation as one of New Zealand's best songsters was the loud, melodic series of musical notes in five, or occasionally six phases of equal length, with the first and fifth phases comprising sweet-toned notes repeated about six times, and the three intermediate phases consisting of a single note repeated about six times. The contact call comprised a short, sharp whistling note repeated rapidly to sound like *pio-pio*, so giving the birds their name.

Piopios were omnivores, taking a wide variety of insects and their larvae as well as worms, forest fruits, seeds, leaves, mosses and grasses. There are reports of flying insects being taken in short sallies from treetop perches. A captive bird ate insects, earthworms, fruits, green herbs, grain, cooked potato, raw meat, and several birds' eggs.

Little is known of the nesting habits. Two nests, each containing two eggs, were found in December, and another nest contained a single egg being brooded by the female, but it was claimed that a clutch could comprise up to five eggs. The cup-shaped nest was built of small dry twigs, bark and moss, with a lining of finer grasses and tree-fern fronds, and approximate external measurements were 18cm in diameter and 13 - 30cm in depth, while internally it was about 7.5cm in diameter and 5cm in depth. At varying heights from the ground, nests were placed in the fork of an upright tree branch, usually among thick foliage. The pinkish-white eggs were variably blotched greyish-brown to black, sometimes more densely at the larger end, and average measurements were 33.0 × 25.0mm. It is not known if the male participated in incubation, but fledglings were defended by both parents.



Figure 6: In a painting by Paul Martinson of a South Island Piopio perching beside a Fiordland stream, the streaked underparts are quite prominent, and perching in the background is a Yellow-fronted Parakeet *Cyanoramphus auriceps*.



Figure 6a: With its white throat and unstreaked underparts shown clearly, a North Island Piopio is depicted in a forest setting by Paul Martinson in his painting, and a Red-fronted Parakeet *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae* is in the lower foreground.

Inquisitive, tame and apparently without fear, the two piopios would have been extremely vulnerable to predation, and there is little doubt that the introduction of mammalian predators brought about their extinction. Commencement of the rapid decline commenced with the arrival of Black Rats *Rattus rattus* and Ship Rats *Rattus norvegicus* with early European settlers, the fall in numbers becoming quite evident after 1870, and the introduction of mustelids in the 1880s almost certainly accelerated the decline.

Tennyson points out that the impact of predation is well highlighted by the disappearance of the South Island Piopio from Stephen's Island, where a population of perhaps 1000 birds was present in 1894, but by 1898 it had been totally wiped out by cats brought to the island by lighthouse keepers. A population in Fiordland persisted until 1905, but was reported to be fast disappearing, and all subsequent sightings on the South Island were dubious, most being attributed to misidentification of the Song Thrush. The last authentic record of the North Island Piopio was of a bird shot at Ohura, south Waikato District, in February 1902.

THE MEGAFAUNA OF AUSTRALIA

Designed by Peter Trussler, a wildlife artist specialising in restoration drawings of prehistoric fauna, and issued by Australia Post in 2008, the Megafauna of Australia set comprises 4 × 55c and 2 × \$1.10 sheet stamps, a miniature sheet and a booklet of 10 × 55c self-adhesive stamps. Depicted on one of the 55c sheet stamps and one of the two self-adhesive booklet stamps is Newton's Mihirung *Genyornis newtoni*, one of more than eight species in five genera in the endemic family Dromornithidae.



Figure 7a



Figure 7b



Figure 7c

Figures 7a, 7b, 7c:

In the Megafauna of Australia issue, Newton's Mihirung is depicted on a 55c sheet stamp, the same stamp on the miniature sheet, the cover of the booklet, and on one of 55c self-adhesive stamps in the booklet.

Murray and Vickers-Rich note that they ranged in size from about 1.5m tall and 60kg in weight to around 500kg in weight and nearly 3m in height, and their strong resemblance to ratites is due entirely to structural convergences in body size, flightlessness and terrestrial locomotion. They were closely related to geese and ducks, and Dromornithidae is placed with Anseriformes in the superorder Anserimorphae, being structurally intermediate between screamers in the family Anhimidae and the Magpie Goose in the family Anseranatidae. They survived until about 20,000 years ago and, being the last to disappear, Newton's Mihirung must have co-existed with humans for at least 15,000 years, an association supported by the existence of Aboriginal cave paintings depicting large birds thought to be this species and the recovery of subfossil bones together with human artifacts in some deposits. It is interesting to note that extant species, including the Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides* and Major Mitchell's Cockatoo *Lophochroa leadbeateri*, are depicted on one of the \$1.10 stamps and in the border of the miniature sheet.

In southeastern Australia, subfossil remains of Newton's Mihirung have been found in New South Wales, southern Victoria and South Australia, and this material indicates that it was more than two metres tall and weighed about 250kg.

It was heavily built, but significantly smaller than the largest species - Stirton's Mihirung *Dromornis stirtoni*, which was more than 3m tall, weighed up to 750kg, and was one of the largest birds known. The location of subfossil deposits suggest that Newton's Mihirung was widely distributed in a variety of habitats, but an apparent preference for open forest and savanna grasslands contrasts with the preference of earlier mihirungs for closed forest. Increasing aridity may have been responsible for *G. newtoni* being replaced by Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* in parts of the range.



Figure 8: A restoration drawing of Newton's Mihirung by Frank Knight

With massive, well-muscled legs, Newton's Mihirungs would have been capable of swift running, despite their size and bulk. The recovery of large numbers of subfossil remains at some sites suggest that they associated in flocks. Subfossil remains with stones in the gizzard are indicative of an herbivorous diet. Virtually nothing is known of the nesting habits, but recovered eggshell fragments reveal that the large eggs would have weighed up to 1.6kg, which is almost twice the volume of Emu eggs, were more elongate than Emu eggs, and had a smooth shell.

The recovery in dune deposits of eggshell fragments from *G. newtoni* together with those from Emus suggest that both species were using sand dunes as nesting sites. Holes found in some eggshell fragments are indicative of predation by Tasmanian Devils *Sarcophilus harrisii* or Eastern Quolls *Dasyurus viverrinus*, both of which are known from subfossil remains recovered in the same dune deposits.

Extinction of the Australian megafauna has been much debated, but there is considerable support for the claim that Aboriginal hunting, regularly involving the use of fire to burn vegetation, may have been a significant cause in the extirpation of some species. Although not seen as a primary cause of extinction, drought conditions that prevailed during the peak glaciation, about 18,000 years ago, may have been another contributing factor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank trustees of Te Papa National Museum of New Zealand, Wellington, for permission to reproduce the fine illustrations by Paul Martinson from *Extinct Birds of New Zealand*.

Special thanks to John Megahan for permission to reproduce his superb painting of moas being attacked by Haast's Eagle.

Thank you also to Frank Knight for permission to reproduce his restoration drawing of Newton's Mihirung.

REFERENCES

Murray P F, P Vickers-Rich. 2004. *Magnificent Mihirungs*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Oliver W R B. 1955. *New Zealand Birds*, 2nd revised edn, A H & A W Reed, Wellington.

Rothschild W. 1907. *Extinct Birds*. Hutchinson, London.

Tennyson A, P Martinson. 2006. *Extinct Birds of New Zealand*. Te Papa Press, Wellington.

Ed My thanks to Joe for this fabulous 2 part article on Extinction in the Antipodes. I hope the members enjoyed this in-depth read as much as I did. And the illustrations and paintings are simply superb!



BUZIN WATCH

No 9

With Mel West



True to pattern, another Buzin issue has emerged at the back end of January. But equally true to form, Bpost made no formal announcement and all the new release websites I have looked at reveal no information whatsoever. It's as if the new Buzin did not exist.

Only the Scharning website tells us that this offering is the **Common Cuckoo**, but doesn't tell us its value type or provide an image. I checked, and it is certainly a new addition to the Buzin aviary. I am grateful to member Steven Ardron for sharing the Bpost new issues booklet, which at least provides a clue. He had to buy it too! As far as I am aware, this is the only document where you will find details. It tells us that it is a large landscape format with a "Verenigingen|Associations" or VA value (€0.77) band. It was issued on the 25th January.

Whilst it is only for special use, it is still baffling why Belgium seems so reticent to publicise these stamps and yet manage to plug some not very inspiring mini-sheets (of which I am not a fan) as well as other curiosities. There are some very fine Belgian stamps and the design quality is usually very high, but seemingly commercialism – as with Royal Mail – has now come to the fore.

Apologies for the less than perfect image above, but it is the best I could do at the moment. I managed to track it down on a Stamp Digest website and the illustration was already not of the best quality. What is clear, is that Buzin still remains a very fine artist and that despite poor reproduction here, his talent still manages to shine through.

BirdPex 9

Every four years BIRDPEX, the exhibition for bird collecting philatelists, is organised. The last one was organised in Luxembourg in 2018. Austria has come up trumps to organise the exhibition in 2022: the dates are 26-28th August 2022; the host town is Gmunden.

Previous hosts have been:

Christchurch (New Zealand, 1990);

Rosenheim (Germany, 1994);

London (England, 1998);

Leek (the Netherlands, 2002);

Nørresundby (Denmark, 2006);

Antwerp (Belgium, 2010);

Poitiers (France, 2014); and

Mondorf-les-Bains (Luxemburg, 2018).



This exhibition is open for every bird stamp exhibitor, catering for beginner or advanced collector.

BSS member Koenraad Bracke has a blog which features details of the exhibition - <https://birdpex.wordpress.com/>. The newest information will be posted there soon, but the blog is still under construction. He states that "We are preparing a new logo for Birdpex 9 (as 2010 with the owl and 2018 with the woodpecker)": Keep an eye on the

Chiffchaff Chat - Website Update By Gilly

Website Stats.

Just a quick update on some stats from the website.

The site continues to attract users from different countries - 49 in total, but 17 of those record no user activity, suggesting our website being found by the country's search engines only. However, 32 countries with active users is good news, and this compares to active users from 24 countries as reported in September 2020. Visits from new countries over the last 2 months include: Hong Kong, Malaysia, Turkey, Finland, Slovakia, Austria, Italy, Brazil and of course from Fiji and Sri Lanka, from our new members from those countries.

Back in September last year we reported that the website had been found by users being 'referred to the BSS site' from other websites, and that birdtheme.org was the top referrer. Now, we have had referrals from 19 different other websites, with birdtheme.org remaining the top referrer, followed by bird-stamps.org.

The most popular website pages to be visited are: Website Updates; Forum; Books and Catalogues; Gallery; Blog and Members Portal.

The Blog used to be higher up the pecking order, but due to no members of the public ever posting a comment against articles in the Blog, we decided to put the Blog in the Members Only area.

Other Amendments to the Site

During this year I have made some fairly major changes to the website, in particular to address the imbalance of information between the public-facing and Member Only areas of the site. So I have removed quite a lot of articles from the public site, and reduced others to short paragraphs, indicating that to access the whole document, you need to be a member;

- The Forum is now finished Up and running, and available for members to use;
- The 'Join Us' page is now a Main menu item (previously under the About Us menu), so it is now more prominent;
- Added Ducks and Penguin pages to the Gallery;
- Society documents page moved to the Members Only area;
- As stated above, Blog moved to the Members Only area, and has been updated;
- Created a Members Gallery, where we shall be displaying member Steven Strauss's bird photographs ... a snippet shown right.



Left - Just a snippet from the Members Gallery, showing Steven's photos with associated bird stamps embedded in the photographs ... these are brilliant, please do take a look.

A New Issues page will be created in the Members Area very soon, and much of the initial content will be provided by member Steven Ardron ... many thanks due to you Steven. If any member has some news on new issues, then please do let me know, and I'll pop it on the website.

We are having second thoughts about a Junior Corner page. Content, was targeted for this area, but we may instead create a page on Cartoon Birds, on the public-facing Website, with all content being provided, by Steven Ardron. This may attract junior members ... Since the inception of the Society, junior members have been far and few between, so we will have to wait and see what happens.

How do we attract the younger age set to collecting stamps? ... this question is

on the Forum, and if you have any ideas, then please do reply to it. On the subject of the Forum, did I tell you It's live now!!

So why not post your discussions, news, questions etc on the site, and help to get members more involved. It's there as a communication aid for you ... you have been asking for it, so please do use it, don't be shy.

A Message from your Flight Editor and Website Developer

I have been your Editor now since June 2017, introduced an all-colour magazine, and have compiled 16 magazines to date, which I hope you have enjoyed. I have also spent a lot of time getting the website up and running, and it too will take up my time now to keep it dynamic and fresh. During lockdown, these duties have been manageable. However, I soon hope to be hitting balls, both on the tennis court and golf course (she says with fingers crossed!) and my hubby also retires in June, and so I will want to spend more time with him (he doesn't know this yet!!).

So Is there anyone out there who would like to give me a big hand in producing Flight, by sourcing material, or even take it on totally? This is not to say I am going to pack it in (unless someone wants to take the job on!), but a hand would be brilliant. Have a think and please do let me know. My contact details are on Page 2 if you want to chat about it. Thank you..... Gilly Christmas.



Please do not forget to change your Standing Order for your 2021 Subscription

Chiffchaff Chat Website Update By Gilly

WEBSITE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

On 21st January, I contacted all the BSS members who had registered for the website (94 at that time), with a simple update of the latest developments. I also included a tiny questionnaire (only 4 questions) in the email to try to ascertain the current usage of the website and to understand what the users liked or disliked, what sections were most useful to them and so on. This information would be really useful to me for the future development of the website, and to ensure that the Society is meeting the members' needs and expectations.

The questionnaire was sent back by 31 members, to whom I extend many many thanks.
The 4 questions and a summary of answers is presented below:

Question 1: How often do you use the website? (daily, few times a week, few times a month, other);

Responses: 7 members have not used the website at all yet; 5 members use it a few times a week; 3 members use it once a month; 12 members use it a few times a month; and 4 members had other responses e.g. occasionally.

Question 2: What sections of the website do you find most useful or interesting to you?

Responses: the most popular pages are: Flight back issues; Knowledge Base; the Blog; New Issue information. A few members commented that they found all the website helpful.

Question 3: Do you think you will read/use the Forum/Blog?

Responses: 8 members said 'Likely'/'Probably'; 13 members said 'Yes'; 1 member was 'Not Sure'; 2 members said 'Unlikely'/'Probably Not'; 1 member said 'No', and 6 members gave no answer.

Question 4: Is there anything else you would like to see in the Members Area?

Responses: There were some interesting suggestions, some of which are already available, as indicated below:

Members Wants List

There is a Forum available called 'Exchange & Mart', where I have started a Topic, to ask members to send me their Wants Lists, and pending the response, I will start a New Page just for this facility. Please read the Forum.

Dealer Page

It's in the list of 'Things To Do'. But if any member can send me any details of good dealers they have had business with, then this would be of great help to get this started.

Fair Dates

Will do this when we are finally out of lockdown

Bird Id in Forum

It's there, under the Bird Stamp Collecting category ... there is a Forum called 'Species Specific and Bird Identification. I've already put a post up, to identify hummingbirds.

Library

On the list of 'Things To Do'

Member Collection Information

I put a question out to members in the last edition of Flight on this - got 2 responses. There is a facility on the website to update your User Profile, and add your collecting interests. Please use the Help document, available on the Forum. It is called User Profile Set Up.

Membership Trends

There is a page called Member Information which currently breaks down the membership by gender, country, and for England, by county. Once we have all the Flight back issues loaded, I can then so some more stats e.g. membership numbers over the years, etc

More stamp news, postal stationery and cancels

There will be a New Issues page soon, and member Steven Ardrone does supply me with a constant flow of articles which I put up on the Blog and in Flight. They will also be added to the Library. I was rather hoping that members could help out here. There are plenty of opportunities to add content to the Forum for stamps, postal stationery, locals, etc.

Member Stories of Unusual Sightings of Birds

Up to you members Get them in to me ☺

Member Exhibition Material

I have one example of exhibition material, which I will put up on the website ... but if any member has an electronic version of an exhibition they have done, please do send it to me (Gilly) ... thanks.

Over the years, I have stayed in Paris when attending the rugby matches between France and Scotland. From our side street hotel in the Opera district, I remember the first time I stumbled by accident on one of the finest streets for stamp shops anywhere, rue Drouot. Having spent some cash on that occasion, more for the experience than for relevance to my collection – they did not have the top value New Caledonia postage due with the kagu overprint that I was looking for – I left my details and have received beautiful catalogues in the post ever since, as a result.

The last catalogue that arrived was accompanied by a sumptuous supplement of France and Colonies Postal History, with eye watering prices for the items listed. I was only able to admire. However, I did linger over two items of great rarity in the bird theme, both featuring the 1845 dove of Basel stamp, one marginal used copy, off paper with huge margins and the other the same but on cover, both with excellent cancellations in Basel in 1849 and 1850. They could be plated as the 9th and 17th stamps from the single plate and came with expertisation.



A fine used copy of the Basel Dove on sale recently for 20,000 euros.

I don't collect symbolic doves or any unidentifiable species of bird but, over the years, especially with the increasing number of meaningless thematic issues from Stamperija countries, I have looked back increasingly to early bird issues which offer so much more of truly philatelic interest, hence my inclination to dally over these rarities.

The Basel dove is one of the world's most famous rarities, issued in 1845. With only one face value of 2½ rappen for letters weighing up to 1 lot (15½ grammes) and carried within the city of Basel, it was the only stamp for the canton of Basel until the Swiss national postal service was established in 1850. Indeed, the cover that was on sale was cancelled on the first day of the Swiss postal service.

The design by Melchior Berri featured a white dove carrying a letter in its beak, in contrast to the traditional way of attaching mail to a carrier pigeon's foot. A bishop's crozier, which is the Basel Coat of Arms, is shown top centre.

Embossed and in three colours, the stamp was also ahead of its time. Engraved and printed by H.B. Krebs of Frankfurt on thick yellowish-white woven paper in sheets of 40 (5 rows of 8 stamps). In 9 years, only 41,480 were printed. Melchior Berri was greatly influential in the late classical period of Swiss architecture in the first half of the nineteenth century. Among other things, he designed decorative letterboxes for the city, six of which are still in use, including the one illustrated here at the Spalentor (the Spalen Gate).



Letterbox at the Basel Spalentor

While not considering for a moment an outlay of either of the 20,000 or 60,000 euros asking prices, it is a pity that this sale did not take place at the time of a rugby match so that I might have been able to view the pieces in real life! I wonder if the buyers were bird stamp collectors? However, for anyone who wants to possess the stamp image for an affordable price, there is always one of the many forgeries of this stamp or the reproduced image on the 100CF Swiss stamp released in 2015 to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Federation of Swiss Philatelic Societies.



Designed by Kaspar Eigensatz of Berne, the 100 centimes stamp issued in 2015 for the 125th anniversary of the Federation of Swiss Philatelic Societies (*Fédération des Sociétés Philatéliques Suisses* in French, FSPHS). The abbreviations for the German (VSPHV) and Italian (FSFS) versions of the organisation's name also appear on the stamp.

[The Basel Dove 1845 | Helvetia Philatelic Society](http://TheBaselDove1845.HelvetiaPhilatelicSociety)
swiss-philately.co.uk

NEW LISTINGS - *this page is a reprint of the Dec. corrupted New Listings(3)*

GAMBIA	30.9.20	Turacos. Sheet of 3.		
100d	750020	Guinea Turaco	<i>Tauraco persa</i>	70009 s/s
100d	750170	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	70007
200d	750170	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	70007
GIBRALTAR	25.9.20	Owls. Set of 5.		
30p	780230	Eurasian Scops-Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	73009
60p	781550	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	73101
90p	781870	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	73127
£1	770140	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	72002
£4	781840	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	73123
GIBRALTAR	25.9.20	Owls. Sheet of 2.		
£2 & surrounds	780710	Eurasian Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	73042
£4 & surrounds	780970	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	73114
GREENLAND	9.10.19	UN World Post Day. 1v.		
17k	720002	Carrier / Post Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	66000
GREENLAND	21.10.19	Environment in Greenland. 1 of set of 2.		
25k	1891170	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	175109
JAPAN	1.11.16	New Year's greetings. 2v.		
52y & 82y	380001	Domestic Rooster	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	35000
JAPAN	1.11.16	New Year lottery. 2v.		
52y+3y & 82y+3y	380001	Domestic Rooster	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	35000
JAPAN	17.7.20	Natural monument protection. 1 of sheet of 10.		
84y	220130	Oriental Stork	<i>Ciconia boyciana</i>	23011 s/s
KOREA (NORTH)	2006	Surcharge on 1975.		
128w on 20c	741440	Derbyan Parakeet	<i>Psittacula derbiana</i>	69118
KOREA (NORTH)	30.9.20	National symbols. 1 of set of 4.		
500w	301420	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	30088
LATVIA	19.6.20	2v.		
1.27€	360110	Hazel Grouse	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>	35014
1.27€	890020	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	84011
LIBERIA	29.9.20	Hornbills. Sheet of 3.		
\$200	980540	Black-casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna atrata</i>	93039
\$300	980510	Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna subcylindrica</i>	93037
\$400	980010	White-crested Hornbill	<i>Tockus albocristatus</i>	93017
In surrounds	980140	African Gray Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	93006
LIBERIA	29.9.20	Hornbills. MS.		
\$800 MS	980140	African Gray Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	93006
MARSHALL ISLANDS	22.5.20	Definitives. 5v.		
6c	722320	Crimson-crowned Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus porphyraceus</i>	66223
\$1.45	680150	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	62056
\$7.75	760510	Long-tailed Koel	<i>Eudynamys taitensis</i>	71046
\$15.5	271270	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	27115
\$26.35	890610	Sacred Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus sanctus</i>	84067
MONGOLIA	8.7.20	Landscapes. 2 of set of 7.		
1300t	302130	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	30196
1300t	150040	Dalmation Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	15005
NAMIBIA	20.8.20	Kites. 2v.		
*	300310	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	30029
*	300190	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	30017
NETHERLANDS	14.9.20	Birds of woods. Sheet of 10.		
1	1891170	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	175109
1	1600160	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	145017
1	1960030	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	163003
1	1041050	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	99104
1	1421930	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	130092
1	1420270	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	138075
1	1760140	Great Gray Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	122071
1	360090	Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	35010
1	1040010	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	99001
1	1600050	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	145003
NORTH MACEDONIA	8.6.20	Tourism. 1 of set of 2.		
30d	150040	Dalmation Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	15005

NEW LISTINGS CLEMENTS 5th edition (C5) numbering but with names from CLEMENTS 6th edition (C6) where different

NEW ISSUE LISTING	Clements		H&M
AUSTRALIA	30.10.20	Christmas. 3 of set of 5.	
65c	1460160	Flame Robin	<i>Petroica phoenicea</i> 138125
65c	730170	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i> 68009
	1860090	Australasian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> 172007
	740820	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i> 69050
	890250	Laughing Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo novaeguineae</i> 84034
	781660	Southern Boobook	<i>Ninox boobook</i> 73084 s/s
\$2.20	1860090	Australasian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> 172007
	740820	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i> 69050
AUSTRALIA	30.10.20	Christmas. Sheet of 2.	
65c	730170	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i> 68009
	1860090	Australasian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> 172007
	740820	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i> 69050
	890250	Laughing Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo novaeguineae</i> 84034
	781660	Southern Boobook	<i>Ninox boobook</i> 73084 s/s
\$2.20	1860090	Australasian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> 172007
	740820	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i> 69050
AUSTRALIA	30.10.20	Sheet of 10x65c.	
10x65c	1460160	Flame Robin	<i>Petroica phoenicea</i> 138125
AUSTRALIA	30.10.20	Booklet of 20x65c.	
20x65c	1460160	Flame Robin	<i>Petroica phoenicea</i> 138125
AUSTRALIA	30.10.20	Self-adhesive booklet of 20x65c.	
20x65c	730170	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i> 68009
	1860090	Australasian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> 172007
	740820	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i> 69050
	890250	Laughing Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo novaeguineae</i> 84034
	781660	Southern Boobook	<i>Ninox boobook</i> 73084 s/s
AUSTRALIA	30.10.20	Self-adhesive booklet of 5x\$2.20.	
5x\$2.20	1860090	Australasian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> 172007
	740820	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i> 69050
CHINA (HONG KONG)	18.8.20	Ocean Park. Sheet of 2 sets of 6 listed in F35/2.	
\$2.60	1020410	Toco Toucan	<i>Ramphastos toco</i> 98031
\$5	70010	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i> 7001
CHINA (TAIWAN)	20.1.21	South Penghu marin national park. 1 of set of 4.	
\$9	680080	Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i> 62077
CHRISTMAS ISLAND	30.10.20	Christmas. 1 of set of 2 and 1 of sheet of 2.	
65c	301080	Brown (Australian) Goshawk	<i>Accipiter fasciatus</i> 30113
	140030	White-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon lepturus</i> 14003
	160040	Abbott's Booby	<i>Papasula abbotti</i> 16006
	722870	Christmas Island Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula whartoni</i> 66276
	190020	Christmas Island Frigatebird	<i>Fregata andrewsi</i> 19002
	781730	Christmas Island Boobook	<i>Ninox natalis</i> 73092 sub-sp
COLOMBIA	15.10.20	El Magdalena. 1 of sheet of 12.	
2000p	250010	American Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i> 25001
COLOMBIA	29.10.20	Bolivar. 1 of sheet of 12.	
1000p	340450	Blue-billed Curassow	<i>Crax alberti</i> 34038
COLOMBIA	30.10.20	National parks. 1 of sheet of 10.	
500p	302010	Harpy Eagle	<i>Harpia harpyja</i> 30186
COLOMBIA	27.11.20	National parks. 1 of sheet of 10.	
500p	340280	Blue-throated Piping-Guan	<i>Pipile cumanensis</i> 34024 s/s
CZECH REPUBLIC	23.10.20	Christmas. 1v.	

NEW LISTINGS (2)

B	1041030	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>	99099
FALKLAND ISLANDS	1.10.20	Mike Peake. 1 value restated from set of 6 listed in F35/2.		
32p	270130	Black-necked Swan	<i>Cygnus melanocoryphus</i>	27012
FALKLAND ISLANDS	13.11.20	Removing mines. 1 of set of 4.		
£1.10	70160	Magellanic Penguin	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>	7017
FALKLAND ISLANDS	20.11.20	Christmas. 1 of set of 4.		
£1.04	70010	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>	7001
	2040180	Long-tailed Meadowlark	<i>Leistes loyca</i>	162064
	70160	Magellanic Penguin	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>	7017
FRANCE	8.1.21	Birds of the islands. Sheet of 4.		
1.18€	1250290	Reunion Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina newtoni</i>	119028
1.18€	2040600	Martinique Oriole	<i>Icterus bonana</i>	162042
1.18€	1380610	Forest Thrush	<i>Turdus lherminieri</i>	130234
1.18€	700040	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	64002
FRANCE	8.1.21	Birds of the islands. Sheet of 2.		
1.18€	1250290	Reunion Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina newtoni</i>	119028
1.18€	1380610	Forest Thrush	<i>Turdus lherminieri</i>	130234
FRANCE	8.1.21	Birds of the islands. Sheet of 2.		
1.18€	700040	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	64002
1.18€	2040600	Martinique Oriole	<i>Icterus bonana</i>	162042
FRANCE	4.11.20	Notre Dame Paris. 1 of sheet of 4		
4€	670410	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	62015
FRENCH ANTARCTIC	6.11.20	World heritage sites. 4 stamp booklets.		
*	70010	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>	7001
*	100120	Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	10010
FRENCH ANTARCTIC	2020	65 years of TAAF. Sheet of 5.		
1.05€	140030	White-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>	14003
1.05€	100010	Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	10001
1.05€	100010	Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	10001
1.05€	70090	Rockhopper Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>	7009
1.05€	70020	Emperor Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes forsteri</i>	7002
FRENCH ANTARCTIC	2.1.21	Aviso la meurthe a Crozet. 1v.		
1.20€	100010	Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	10001
FRENCH ANTARCTIC	2.1.21	Cormorants. 1v.		
1€	170290	Kerguelen Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax verrucosus</i>	17022
	170280	Crozet Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax melanogenis</i>	17027 s/s
GAMBIA	30.9.20	Turacos. Sheet of 3.		
100d	750020	Guinea Turaco	<i>Tauraco persa</i>	70009 s/s
100d	750170	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	70007
200d	750170	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	70007
GAMBIA	30.10.20	Southern Ground Hornbill. Sheet of 4.		
4 @ 100d (different)	980570	Southern Ground-Hornbill	<i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>	93046
GAMBIA	30.10.20	Ostrich. Sheet of 4.		
4 @ 100d (different)	10011	Somali Ostrich	<i>Struthio molybdophanes</i>	1001 s/s
GAMBIA	30.10.20	Yellow-collared Lovebird. Sheet of 3 + MS.		
3 @ 100d (diff.) & surrounds	741670	Yellow-collared Lovebird	<i>Agapornis personatus</i>	69096
250d MS	741670	Yellow-collared Lovebird	<i>Agapornis personatus</i>	69096
GRENADA	30.9.20	Seabirds. Sheet of 4 + MS.		
\$5.50	160050	Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>	16004
\$5.50	700210	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	64020
\$5.50	100010	Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	10001
\$5.50	160080	Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>	16008

NEW LISTINGS (3)

\$14 MS	190030	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	19003
GRENADA	30.9.20	Flycatchers. Sheet of 3 + MS.		
\$6	1420540	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	138024
\$6	1164030	Fork-tailed Flycatcher	<i>Tyrannus savana</i>	108073
\$6	1163600	Great Crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	108123
\$14 MS	1162480	Hammond's Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax hammondii</i>	108160
GRENADA	30.9.20	Flamingos. Sheet of 5 + MS.		
5 @ \$4.50 (different)	250010	American Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	25001
\$14 MS	250030	Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>	25003
GUYANA	30.9.20	Owls. Sheet of 4.		
\$400	780690	Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	73041
\$400	781520	Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	73104
\$400	781870	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	73127
\$400	781190	Eurasian Pygmy-Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>	73065
GUYANA	30.9.20	Owls. Sheet of 2.		
\$600	770140	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	72002
\$600	780460	Eastern Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops asio</i>	73021
GUYANA	30.9.20	Flamingos. Sheet of 3 + MS.		
3 @ \$450 (different)	250010	American Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	25001
\$800 MS	250030	Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>	25003
ICELAND	29.10.20	Christmas. 1 of set of 2.		
*	360060	Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus muta</i>	35007
INDONESIA	15.9.20	Diplomatic relations with Colombia. 2 of sheet of 4.		
5000r	1870360	Lesser Bird-of-paradise	<i>Paradisaea minor</i>	174039
5000r	2011860	Multicolored Tanager	<i>Chlorochrysa nitidissima</i>	157166
JAPAN	16.10.20	World of Art. 1 of sheet of 10.		
84y	270630	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	27059
JAPAN	16.11.20	Animals. 1 of sheet of 10. Self-adhesive.		
63y	1540010	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	143001
JAPAN	16.11.20	Animals. 2 of sheet of 10. Self-adhesive.		
84y	70020	Emperor Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes forsteri</i>	7002
84y	270940	Indian Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	27083
KAZAKHSTAN	23.10.20	Fauna. 1 of sheet of 3.		
500t	780710	Eurasian Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	73042
KOREA (NORTH)	30.9.20	National symbols. Wooden stamps. 1 of set of 4.		
500w	301420	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	30088
MARSHALL ISLANDS	16.10.20	Geese. Sheet of 5 + MS.		
\$1.50	270200	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	27017 sub-sp
\$1.50	270180	Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>	27016
\$1.50	270270	Emperor Goose	<i>Chen canagica</i>	27024
\$1.50	270250	Snow Goose	<i>Chen caerulescens</i>	27022
\$1.50	270290	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	27026
\$8 MS	270230	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	27020
MARSHALL ISLANDS	2.11.20	Antarctic wildlife. 3 of sheet of 6 + MS.		
\$1.50	70050	Chinstrap Penguin	<i>Pygoscelis antarctica</i>	7005
\$1.50	660020	South Polar Skua	<i>Stercorarius maccormicki</i>	61002
\$1.50	110070	Snow Petrel	<i>Pagodroma nivea</i>	11007
\$8 MS	70020	Emperor Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes forsteri</i>	7002
MYANMAR	12.12.19	1v.		
100k	930060	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	88006
NETHERLANDS	15.6.20	Coastal Birds. Set of 10.		
1	680200	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	62075

NEW LISTINGS (4)

1	660060	Parasitic (Arctic) Jaeger (Skua)	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	61004
1	620590	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	58031
1	2023070	Snow Bunting	<i>Geospiza nivalis</i>	154045
1	670020	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	62043
1	670560	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	62022
1	1220900	Horned (Shore) Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	116079
1	570070	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	54010
1	620780	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	58077
1	600450	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	57040
POLAND	30.11.20	Polish birds. Sheet of 4.		
3z30 + label	220120	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	23011
3z30 + label	220070	Black Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	23007
3z30 + label	200130	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	20049
3z30 + label	200030	Gray Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	20053
RUMANIA	1.9.20	The Danube delta swans. Set of 4. Also sheet of 4.		
3.30l,5l,8l50 & 10l50 (diff.)	270110	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	27010
RUSSIA	3.12.20	New Year Greetings. 1v.		
23r	1961170	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	163112
SOUTH GEORGIA	15.10.20	Definitives. 3 of set of 12.		
50p	100080	Gray-headed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chrysostoma</i>	
£2	1240540	South Georgia Pipit	<i>Anthus antarcticus</i>	118051
£5	70110	Macaroni Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>	7011
ST. PIERRE & MIQUELON	12.1.21	1v.		
0.60€	620780	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	58077
SURINAM	4.11.20	Penguins. 5v.		
F	70010	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>	7001
\$26	70090	Rockhopper Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>	7009
\$29	70110	Macaroni Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>	7011
\$30	70030	Gentoo Penguin	<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>	7003
\$32	70160	Magellanic Penguin	<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>	7017
SWEDEN	14.1.21	Valuable nature. Booklet of 5v. Self adhesive.		
Brev	840840	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	79078
SWITZERLAND	5.11.20	Christmas. 1 of set of 4.		
85c	1421280	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	130031
	1600450	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	145040
TOKELAU	1.3.17	Birds of Tokelau. Set of 4 & sheet of 4.		
45c	620360	Bristle-thighed Curlew	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>	58008
\$1.40	680390	Black Noddy	<i>Anous minutus</i>	62088
\$2	190040	Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>	19004
\$3	160090	Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	16009
TRISTAN DA CUNHA	9.11.20	Vagrant species. 2 of set of 4.		
60p	461140	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinicus</i>	43111
£2	70010	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>	7001
TURKEY	15.10.20	Fractals in nature. 1 of set of 4.		
6l50	381530	Indian (Common) Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	35202
UKRAINE	7.10.20	Birds of prey. Set of 8.		
9h	300860	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	30080
9h	320250	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	32024
9h	302130	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	30196
9h	290010	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaeetus</i>	29001
9h	302180	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	30200
9h	302050	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>	30190

NEW LISTINGS (5)

9h	300840	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	30079
9h	301920	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	30180
URUGUAY	12.9.20	M'Bopicua. 2 of sheet of 4.		
27p	461140	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinicus</i>	43111
27p	2021930	Yellow Cardinal	<i>Paroaria cristata</i>	156001
URUGUAY	30.9.20	Tourism. 1 of sheet of 10.		
25p	880180	Surucua Trogon	<i>Trogon surrucura</i>	83021
URUGUAY	23.10.20	Diplomatic relations with Poland. Sheet of 2.		
25p	220110	Maguari Stork	<i>Ciconia maguari</i>	23010
70p	220120	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	23011
UNITED STATES	16.10.20	Winter scenes. 3 in self-adhesive booklet of 2 x 10v.		
*	2030230	Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	156014
*	781000	Barred Owl	<i>Strix varia</i>	73116
*	1890070	Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	175004
VIETNAM	14.11.20	Kingfishers. Set of 3 + MS.		
4000d	890160	Black-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>	84029
4000d	890010	Blyth's Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo hercules</i>	84010
4500d	890320	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	84034
45000d MS	890380	Black-capped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon pileata</i>	84047
VIETNAM	14.11.20	Kingfishers. Booklet.		
4000d	890160	Black-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>	84029
VIETNAM	14.11.20	Kingfishers. Booklet.		
4000d	890010	Blyth's Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo hercules</i>	84010

//////////////////////////////////// MACHINE LABELS

ALAND	2.2.21	Songbirds with musical notations. Set of 4.		
1.90€	1960010	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	163001
1.90€	1421280	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	130031
1.90€	1401750	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	136104
1.90€	1402600	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	136090
FAROE ISLANDS	1.10.20	Haymaking. 3 of set of 4.		
3 @ 12k (different)	550060	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	52001

Sadly, there is no IDENTIFICATION PARADE, nor RECENT BIRDS IN THE PHILATELIC AVIARY in this issue of Flight.

However, member Joe Forshaw would like to point out a factual error on Page 35 in the December 2020 edition of Flight, on the write-up on the Honeyeater. He states that the range of the Regent Honeyeater is south-eastern mainland Australia, and not south-western Australia as stated..

Well spotted Joe, and Roger Chapman send his thanks for bringing this to his attention.



Stamps for Sale - Dealers

PAULA CANT STAMPS

THEMATICS & NEW ISSUE SERVICE

Visit Our Online Shop at

www.shop.paulacantstamps.co.uk

Online Packets For Ship and Bird Collectors



www.e-packet.co.uk

Come & See Us At Stamp Fairs

www.e-packet.co.uk/WHERETOSEEUS.htm

Wants Lists Welcome

paula@paulacantstamps.co.uk

51 Ketelbey Rise,
Basingstoke
RG22 4PE
01256 415699



THAMES THEMES

Bird Thematics

Our substantial stock is World
Unmounted Mint

Wants Lists Welcome



Email: thamesthemes@aol.com

Phone: 0118 9873516

Thames Themes, PO Box 4860, Earley. RG6 5YF



Philatelic Supplies



A Whisper in the Willows

A Susurruration in the Shrubbery



- ☐ THE WORD IS ABOUT – IT HAS FINALLY ARRIVED
- ☐ THE BIRDS STAMP WEBSITE WHERE YOU CAN ORDER ONLINE
- ☐ WHERE YOU CAN SEARCH BY SPECIES OR COUNTRY
- ☐ THE ULTIMATE BIRDS ON STAMPS WEBSITE

LOG-ON
To

WWW.BIRDSTAMPS.ONLINE

You Can Order On-Line From Over 3,900 Different Sets and Singles of Bird Stamps
More Than 2,000 Images and New Material Is Added Daily



Philatelic Supplies: 359 Norton Way South, Letchworth Garden City, Herts SG6 1SZ
Contact: mark@philatelicsupplies.co.uk

01462 684191



Printed by Bulpitt Print Ltd: Unit P, Hunting Gate, East Portway, Andover SP10 3SJ
www.bulpittprint.com